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CHRIST
AND HIS CHURCH

CHAPTERS ON
THE PROTESTANT FAITH

BY THE

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I

CHURCH OF ENGLAND TEACHING CONCERNING THE SINNER'S APPROACH TO GOD

1898.

ST. PAUL'S, ONSLOW SQUARE,

VICAR—THE REV. PREBENDARY WEBB-PEPLOE.

On the Sunday Mornings during Advent

THE VICAR

HOPES TO PREACH ON

"Church of England Teaching concerning the Sinner's Approach to God."

SERVICE AT 11 A.M.

Key Text, St. John xiv. 6—

"Jesus saith":	*Then the Church holds that:*
Nov. 27.—"I am the Way". .	No further Sacrifice can be offered for Sins.
Dec. 4.—"I am the Truth" .	The Scriptures are the only rule of Faith and of Practice.—St. John v. 39.
Dec. 11.—"I am the Life" . .	No Priestly Act can convey the true Bread to the Soul.
Dec. 18.—"No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."	No human Intercessor or Confessor can be permitted.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

I

CHURCH OF ENGLAND TEACHING CONCERNING THE SINNER'S APPROACH TO GOD[1]

"Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God."—HEB. x. 11, 12.

IT is with the utmost diffidence, and with a deep sense of pain, that I have undertaken to speak upon the difficulties and distresses which are now dividing the Church of England, and which are unquestionably imperilling the very existence of our national Church. Upon the poli-

[1] Preached at St. Paul's, Onslow Square, 27th November 1898.

tical aspect of the present crisis I would, of course, say not a word; of the mere ecclesiastical status of our Church I have also not one word to say; for all that concerns us during the hours of divine worship is what relates to the spiritual and the heavenly. We come to church as Christians who desire to hear what the Lord God will say to our souls, and not simply as members of a national Church. What saith the Scripture? This is the inquiry that concerns Christians; and we have the Master's own command, "Search the Scriptures."[1] Hence we may safely say concerning all matters that ought to be treated from the pulpit, that our one and only rule should be, "To the Law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."[2] While, therefore, we deal with subjects which in some sense concern us ecclesiastically and politically, we can here only speak upon such branches of

[1] St. John v. 39. [2] Isaiah viii. 20.

those subjects as teach directly what God the Lord has to say to our souls. I "take up my parable," as I have said, with diffidence and with pain:—With *diffidence*, because I am well aware that in discussing differences of doctrine and ceremonial it is exceedingly difficult to do justice to those from whom we differ; and there is always a danger of exaggerating and of accentuating those differences. It is so much more easy to be bitter than to be tender and loving; it is so much more easy to seek out points of difference than to cover them with brotherly love:—With *pain*, because few of us, who have reached middle or old age, could have supposed in the days of our youth that the main, fundamental truths which distinguish the Church of England from all others, would ever again be questioned or disputed. Would to God that we had no need to spend the precious time, which should be given to "building up ourselves in our most holy faith," in asking what are "the

first principles of the oracles of God."[1] Surely it would be good if we could leave "the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and go on unto perfection."[2]

But though contrary to all one's natural instincts, I dare not refrain any longer from speaking upon these subjects, as I have been earnestly requested to do; or from delivering my own soul upon points which are vital not only to the Church and to the land, but which are peculiarly vital to the spiritual interests of the flock which God has entrusted to me, and to the honour and holiness of that ministry which is committed to us clergy.

In order to carry out the line of thought which I propose to follow, as laid down in the syllabus before you, I would ask you first of all to pause and consider wherein lies the root of the grievous and painful disagreement of doctrine which now splits the Church of England into almost hostile camps, and which painfully

[1] Heb. v. 12. [2] Heb. vi. 1.

hinders her in her true work of winning souls to the Saviour. What—or rather Where—is the central point to which all our thoughts ought to converge when we speak of our Religion? I answer, the Lord Jesus Christ. This you would expect me to say; but I unhesitatingly add that all our difficulties have arisen because men have not studied the person and work of Christ, and of Christ alone. They have not apprehended what God made Him to be for man; what He has already wrought for man; what He is now for the sons of men; and what He ought to be to each of us in that spiritual department of our being, by which alone we can be linked to God in heaven. If this had been kept to the front, I humbly believe that a very large proportion of our difficulties would have been avoided; and with the Christian liberty which we ought all to possess and to accord to our brethren, it would never have been considered of vital importance whether

there was a little more or less of ceremonial in our services. One man's taste must differ from another's, and who would have thought of complaining if one man preferred more or less music, or more or less external beauty in the building? These questions ought never to be agitated or considered, provided that in every single thing said or done, there were no intention to teach, or symbolically to represent, doctrines which are not according to God's Holy Word. We grant absolute liberty in non-essentials; but at the same time we must stand out firmly against such things as symbolise, or are declared to symbolise, what is not according to God's holy truth.

This is all the bone of contention between one side and the other; and oh that all could see that there ought to be nothing symbolising doctrine which derogates from the dignity and perfection of the work already accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour; and

that there must be nothing between the soul and that "liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free." [1]

I ask then, what—or rather Whom—are we to consider? And my answer is, the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. For this purpose therefore, I have chosen one great key text—St. John xiv. 6—in which it seems that the Lord Jesus Christ has provided us, step by step, with the remedy for four patent evils which are found in our Church to-day, and which are doing us great and grievous wrong. Unquestionably the Lord Jesus Christ puts Himself before us in this text as being "all in all" that can be required by man: for if He is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," and if He brings us "to the Father" Himself, all is done that requires to be done: the needs of man are met, and he should never trouble himself about anything that may happen, if only he has this

[1] Gal. v. 1.

perfect access to the Father. I shall endeavour, therefore, in the following discourses to bring out the four special thoughts involved in this text, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me"; and to-day I ask your attention to the first, namely, how the Lord Jesus Christ is Himself, and in Himself alone, the perfect Way up to the Father in heaven. So perfect a Way is He, that He is the door to *all* who are willing to enter in by Him. So perfect a Way is He, that all true believers are in Him carried right up to the very throne of God; and notwithstanding the extent of man's depravity through the Fall, there is perfect access to the great high God in heaven for all who approach "by the blood of Christ" (Ephes. ii. 13).

The sacrificial system of the priesthood of man for his brother man—the notion that one man is to represent another in the presence of God, with all that is involved therein; the fallacy that one man

has the power to communicate to another the mercy of God in an authoritative manner—that he has the power to deal as an intermediary or spiritual superior to other men—is swept away once and for ever, if we do but recognise the fact that the way to God on His throne is not only open; but that it is actually pressed upon man, that he should communicate with the Father in, and by, Jesus Christ alone, without any other Intermediary, Representative, or Priest (Heb. x. 19, &c.).

The whole fabric falls to the ground if the foundation is found to be false; and I am deeply convinced that the whole sacerdotal system which is so injuring the Church of England to-day is absolutely without foundation, either from God's Word or the Prayer-Book. This would be seen at once if men would study the Scriptures, and especially the Epistle to the Hebrews: and if they would deal truly and simply with the Book of Com-

mon Prayer. What are the words of my text, for instance? "Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." Then, what possible benefit can there be in the operation of any sinful man on my behalf? I am left at the close of all his performances with this authoritative declaration: "The sacrifices of priests can never take away sins"; therefore the whole system is at once declared to be worthless.

But there is more than this to be found in dwelling on the Lord Jesus Christ as the perfect Way; for if we can establish Him as "The Way," we can prove that everything else that is claimed by the priesthood as a peculiar mark of official prerogative must fall to the ground, with its prelude of sacerdotal authority. The question is, Do these men claim anything that distinguishes them from the rest of

mankind? Or is there anything in their doctrine and ritual which as Christian Churchmen we are bound to reject? The answer is painful, and it is this, That the eyes of many would seem to be darkened, so that they cannot see the blessing which God has granted to the world in Christ Jesus; for we read, not in one, but in multitudes of publications, that ritual is essentially the expression of doctrine, and that the doctrine to be expressed in our Church is the special Priesthood of the Clergy. To prove this I must bring before you certain extracts which I have selected, not from casual pamphlets published without authority, but from well-known books, which are appealed to as decisive, and upon which numbers of our brethren are feeding their souls. And first I take an authoritative statement given in a book called "The Congregation in Church," where it is affirmed that ritual and ceremonial "serve to teach the doctrines of the Church and of the various sacraments

in a simple and forcible manner, as well as to keep the same continually before the eyes and before the minds of the faithful"; and that (besides many other arguments) "a reason for their use is connected with the desire which has grown up of late years among the High Church party, for the restoration of the visible unity of Christendom, and especially the renewal of communion between the Church of England and both the Eastern and the rest of the Western Church; and with this view it has become an avowed object to assimilate the Anglican service as much as possible to that of other Catholic churches." ("The Congregation in Church," pp. 20, 21.)

This book is spoken of by many as "the most valuable and plain guide that can be found for an explanation of the services of our Holy Church." Therefore we are confronted with the fact that many among us now openly propose to assimilate the Church of England to what they call the

communion of "other Catholic Churches." Indeed they intend to carry us a great deal further than this, for we are told that in this Church of England we are bound to have and to use most of the forms and ceremonies which belonged to the old Judaic dispensation. This they affirm was exactly parallel with the Christian— "Everything under the Mosaic law had its counterpart under Christ. The sacrifices, the victim, the priests, the temple, the altar, the vestments, the incense, the ornaments, the rites and ceremonies—all these were purposely ordained by God as types of corresponding things which the new dispensation should bring forth, patterns to be copied in our Christian worship." "It is clear, therefore, that although the ceremonial was altered when the Messiah came, the necessity for ceremonial was not. That remained as absolute as before." "There is no reason to believe that the forms and ceremonies of worship were reduced to any great extent

by Christ and His apostles in their time. They were changed, of course, to some extent, but not abolished." Again, "The Bible is full of ritualism from first to last." ("The Congregation in Church," pp. 6, 7.)

There are other parallel expressions throughout this volume which is declared to be authoritative by large numbers of our brethren. And I must remind you that these publications are sent forth not merely by the thousand, but in some cases by the tens of thousands.

Further, they maintain the complete identity of Ritual, because 1 Cor. x. 6, 11; Heb. viii. 5 (R.V.); ix. 23; x. 1, and other passages, declare plainly that the Mosaic dispensation was typical of the new, and that therefore we are to follow and preserve all the types and shadows of the Law; "that the ministers of the earthly tabernacle . . . perform Divine service at, or in that Sanctuary, which being made after the pattern seen

in the Mount, is the visible representation on earth of the true sanctuary which is in heaven." ("The Congregation in Church," p. 7.) Yet the apostle in Heb. viii. 8, 9, and 13, expressly shows that the whole of the "old covenant" system had passed away completely, and vanished into decay; while in the third chapter of the 2nd Corinthians St. Paul twice says that the glory of the old covenant was "done away," and "abolished," and that therefore, while there was a veil over the heart of the Jew in studying the Old Testament, yet when he turned to the Lord that veil should in Christ Jesus be altogether done away, and no repetition of the Old Testament types and shadows would be needed, for that Christ had fulfilled them all.

Again when we come to inquire further what is revealed in God's Holy Word, the first question with which we must challenge our brethren is—For what purpose was Christ revealed as the sacrifice

for man? "To take away sin," was it not? We are told in Heb. ix. 26 that "Now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself;" and in 1 Peter iii. 18, that "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, *that He might bring us to God.*" As I watch my dying Saviour, I see Him casting His eyes around to inquire whether there was one single type, shadow, figure, or prophecy which had not received its complete fulfilment; and realising by Divine intuition that there was yet one single prophecy to be accomplished in Him, He breathed forth the words "I thirst," but the moment He had said this, and the fulfilment was secured, He cried, "It is finished," and yielded up His spirit into the hands of His Father. Will our brethren tell us, WHAT was "finished"? What have been the results of His rendering back His spirit to God? Surely the first is that He has become the re-

conciliator between God and man, so that, as St. Paul says in 2 Cor. v. 19, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." You cannot shut out one sinner from the presence and favour of God, if only that sinner is willing to draw nigh and be blessed. In all the generations there is not one man of all the millions who have ever lived for whom the work of the Lord Jesus was not absolutely complete. He died for the sins of the whole world. Thus, from the moment when the Christ expired as the Saviour of sinners, sin, the power which prevented access to God, is from the Divine side, altogether put away, and by Divine justice the door of Heaven stands wide open, for all. The whole human race is told that there is nothing to prevent them from drawing nigh to the Holy God. As we look at His accomplished work we see that in Christ Jesus not merely *sins* but *sin* is altogether "put

away": "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." May I say it reverently, that the Holy Ghost would seem to have laboured (as it were) to find a sufficiency of expression, by different thoughts and different utterances, for the magnificence of Christ's completed work; to make plain that He had *finished the work* that God gave Him to do; and that each man may start with this glorious truth,—*My sin* is gone, and I am free with regard to my iniquity, for "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all"; and "God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we" (who are the "we"?—it must mean *all* men who will take it) "may be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Now, if this be a fact, I ask you (though we are half-ashamed to say some of the things that we are compelled to say; lest we should be considered as wanting in reverence towards God), Can God Him-

self prevent any man from going to Him if only the man is willing to come? "He is well pleased for His righteousness' sake"; justice has exactly met all its demands in the person of Christ Jesus our Lord, and all believers are without sin in Him before God; all the obstruction of sin has been cleared away; and standing at the foot of the Cross I may gaze upward, and see the heavens opened, and the Saviour standing at the right hand of God; before He seats Himself on his Father's throne. In awe and trembling I ask, Can *I* as a poor sinner ever hope to reach God? And again I am greeted with the words of my text, which tell me that "This Man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;" and this conveys to my troubled soul the assurance that the sacrifice which Christ offered has been accepted for all; and that "the Way" "to the Father" is now open for every believer in Christ Jesus.

And what now of the high priest under the Old Testament dispensation, to whom they point us back, and say that every item connected with him must be fulfilled? The high priest entered the Holy of Holies once a year; but he dared not stay there; he must hasten forth lest he die. The old Jewish writers tell us that the man who was called to fulfil that awful ceremonial of representing Israel before God used to hurry out lest he should be smitten for his own unworthiness, and that he made haste to escape from the majesty of God; but I would have you remember that our High Priest takes His place before God, not merely as the *Representative*, but as the *Inclusive* Man, and that He has an uninterrupted session at the right hand of God. He passed in when the gates were opened, according to the words of the prophecy: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates: even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in"; He went up to the very throne of the

Father as the Representative and the Inclusive Man, and He never comes forth again except to bring blessing to His own people, and judgment upon those who resist His authority, in that last great day when the Church shall be complete.

But meantime, He is there in heaven "for us": and being there, He not only prevails to represent our needs, and to plead our cause before offended justice, but He has taken us in with Him if we are believers. He took His own people up to the very throne of God; and where Christ is, the believer is (judicially); and from the very moment he believes, he may claim to draw nigh to God as his own Father without fear. It matters not one atom about his natural depravity, or the extent of the sins that he has committed: he may sit where Christ sits, and God can gaze upon him with satisfaction; for he is in Christ Jesus, in the presence of God, and has been purged with the precious blood of Christ.

What, then, do we want with a human priest, who can only offer up a sacrifice day by day, whether of bullocks and sheep or of bread and wine? The priests can never offer anything but that which is in itself unworthy of God's acceptance, and which therefore can never in itself make atonement, or in any sense whatever propitiate God for sin. Yet we are told to believe that the sacrament is in every way commemorative, and more than commemorative, of the sacrifice of Christ, for that it really does propitiate God and bring peace to men. "When we speak," says Mr. Staley, "of the Holy Eucharist as a sacrifice, we do not understand any repetition of the sacrifice of the cross, or any renewal of Christ's sufferings or death. His sufferings and His death took place once for all, and can never be repeated. Neither are we to suppose that anything is wanting in His sufferings or sacrifice which the Eucharistic sacrifice supplies. But we mean that in

the Holy Eucharist we plead before God the one sacrifice offered once upon the cross, even as Christ Himself presents the same offering in heaven. Thus the Fathers spoke of the Holy Eucharist as 'the unbloody sacrifice.' The Eucharistic Sacrifice is not so much on a line with the Sacrifice on Calvary as with the pleading of that Sacrifice in heaven." (Staley's "Catholic Religion," p. 251.) Much is said about the views of the Fathers on this matter of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. But let us go behind the Fathers to the Grandfathers, who are the Apostles; and while the Fathers and the Ritualists may say that the Eucharist is the "unbloody sacrifice," and that the Eucharist is a propitiatory sacrifice in connection with Christ's perpetual sacrifice in heaven, we find no mention of any sacrifice but one; and we are assured that "by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

Moreover, we are told that souls in the

intermediate state are benefited by the Eucharistic sacrifice offered in the church. We *must* deny this solemnly. We dare not let such words as these go uncontradicted: "Our Lord's death upon the cross was for all men throughout all time, and the Eucharistic pleading of that death avails for all the Church, whether on earth or in Paradise. . . . In celebrating the Eucharist the English Church prays that 'we and all Thy whole Church may obtain remission of our sins and all other benefits of His Passion.' The living compose but a small part of 'all the whole Church,' the greater part of the Church being in the intermediate state." (Staley's "Catholic Religion," p. 252.)

We boldly affirm that the whole service of the Church in its Holy Communion is constituted for the Church militant and not for the Church triumphant, and that there is no intention in it of remembering souls who are supposed to be waiting in Paradise, or suffering in Pur-

gatory, hoping for better things at the Resurrection.

And yet how far would these modern teachers carry us. "Protestant, (is) a term originally applied to the adherents of Luther . . . and afterwards used in England to describe all those who *protested* against the Romish supremacy and the errors of the Church of Rome. But the word has long ago come to mean anybody or anything who is non-Catholic; or as the *Church Times* puts it, anything which is 'born of mere human invention and self-will.' Hence the term applies to Atheists, &c., and their practices, as well as to the Puritans of the English Church. The same paper pungently remarks that 'it is the Protestantism rather than the Popery of the Church of Rome which is its worst fault.'" ("The Congregation in Church," p. 198.) That is to say, if we believe this writer, the Church of England is practically returning to the views and doctrines, the rejection of which was

the object and cause of the Reformation.

The book from which I am about to quote, "The Ceremonial of the Altar," is not generally circulated; but my copy was obtained with the distinct understanding that it would be used in the controversy of the day. In Part I., "Instructions to Priests," we read: "In Consecration he should have carefulness in making the Body of Christ. Reverence in handling the Body of Christ. Devotion in receiving the Body of Christ." "When he handles the Host let him have great reverence. For that It comprehends the most holy Body of Christ. And yet more, for that It comprehends His most holy Soul. And most of all, for that It comprehends His most holy Godhead." These are things which the priest is to think of when he desires to "celebrate mass," and during celebration he has directions for "inclining towards the Host"; and he is bidden to say: "Hail evermore, most

holy flesh of Christ, to me above all things the sum of delight! May the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ be to me, a sinner, the Way and the Life. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Here he receives the Body, making a cross with the same before his mouth. Then to the Blood he says, with great devotion, Hail for evermore, Heavenly Drink, to me above all things the sum of delight, &c. . . . Here he receives the Blood, which taken, and the chalice again covered, he adores," &c. ("Ceremonial of the Altar," pp. 2, 3, 57.) My brethren, if this be Church of England doctrine, we are bound to abandon her; but if not, we must abandon the doctrine, and not the Church of England.

But I have one further consideration which must be advanced. We have seen (1) that Christ has opened the way to God; we have seen (2) that He has passed to God as the inclusive man, and therefore we are seated in Him at the

right hand of God, if we are truly believers in Christ; but (3) we see in our text that "every priest standeth daily ministering and offering the same sacrifices, which can never take away sin; but this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." When He thus sat down, He declared before the universe that the work which He came to do was finished: the Throne was won; all Aaronic symbols were done away with for ever; and now that He sits as the King and Priest on His throne, it is not to offer up sacrifices for sin, but to minister blessing to His people, to be the Melchizedek who will convey God's favour to the believer, and who will graciously accept our feeble efforts of devotion, love, and gratitude.

And this opens out the last point upon which I must enter to-day. If Christ is "the Way," and is now passed into the Heavens for us, we may safely hear the apostle in his Epistle to the Hebrews:

"Let us draw near with a true heart," "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace." I come, a sinner still, though a sinner pardoned; a sinner conscious of sin indwelling, though perfected by the one offering before God; I come as one raised by faith to the very throne of God; but as one who pleads for mercy through the Saviour, knowing that he may have all the mercy he needs. Grace I must ever receive, or perish; but the Saviour conveys from the Father the precious gift of the Holy Spirit to the souls of those who are linked to Him by faith in His blood; and the Holy Ghost permeates the believer until he is cleansed, vitalised, and strengthened, and the man becomes rich in the power of his Redeemer—not through any act which proceeds from the priest who officiates on earth, but through the merit and power of the one perfect Sacrifice which can never be repeated or re-presented before God. Again, "By a new and living way . . . let us draw near with

a true heart, in full assurance of faith." Our *position* is not always our *possession*, but it is intended to be; and God forbid that any man should come between my soul and my God. The way is open, the sacrifice is perfect, and in the Lord Jesus Christ I can claim by faith perfect fellowship with God the Father.

I know not how any soul which has a priestly intermediary can ever hold communion with God; for I cannot hold communion through an earthly messenger. The Queen may send a messenger to me, and he may carry out his commission perfectly, but I have no fellowship with the Queen. Fellowship has to do with the soul and with the spirit, and by virtue of the finished work of Christ I have fellowship with God in Him; therefore I need no earthly intermediary.

But if I am to draw near with "full assurance," my life must correspond in some degree to my privilege. The redeemed man who realises the glorious liberty of

access to God, will assuredly know a joy that none can take away; the joy of walking before God in the land of the living; of walking "in that light in which he will see light"; and this light is to permeate every part of his being. Then may he come to the Holy table with joy, and without any human mediation may feast, by faith, upon his Saviour; not from an earthly Altar, but, by spiritual realisation, in his heart—for it is perfectly certain that in Hebrews xiii. 10, the word "altar" does not refer to any earthly table, but to the Cross of Christ. St. Paul speaks of the Lord's Table, not of the Lord's Altar; and when he enumerates the offices of the ministry in Ephesians iv. and elsewhere, there is not one word in regard to priests. The word "altar" is never used in the New Testament concerning anything on earth; and the word "priest" is never used concerning individual believers on earth. It is only found in a few passages which refer to *the whole body* of believers; who are

priests, in the sense that without any intermediary they are called to "offer up spiritual sacrifices" unto God.

Brethren, rise by faith to this life in heaven. Sit and walk in heavenly places, and by giving all you can in gratitude to God for the infinite mercies He has given to you, show that you know what is meant by the privilege of drawing nigh to God through Jesus Christ, the perfect and the only "Way."

II

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

II

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES[1]

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."—ROM. xv. 4.

"THE Lord Jesus Christ (says St. Paul) is our hope" (1 Tim. i. 1). If therefore our hope is fixed on Him, the first thing we have to ask is, What Jesus Christ really is to us. Now Pascal has used a very striking expression when he says that "Jesus Christ is the centre of everything, and the object of everything; and he who does not know Him, knows nothing of the order of the world, and nothing of himself." These words will, I believe, commend themselves to all

[1] Sermon preached by the Rev. Prebendary Webb-Peploe, M.A., 4th December 1898.

true Christians, as furnishing us with a human exposition of the Master's own saying: "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me"; and again: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures." In both these passages, as in so many others, when He alludes to the prophets, and to the Holy Scriptures in their entirety, Jesus Christ was seeking to commend Himself to the Jews, as being the revelation of God for the salvation of men. If the Lord Jesus Christ thus commends Himself through the Scriptures to the knowledge of men, we must see at once that He places the seal of truth on all of them; if He commends the Old Testament, as revealing Himself, He surely means us to find Him in all its parts; and however careless our study may be, we cannot fail to find that in the New Testament He is the centre of everything. Now Jesus Christ is revealed to us there, as the Way, the Door, the Guide, and the High Priest,

who alone can lead us to God. If, therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ is to be always found in the Scripture; if He is the one and only medium through whom God may be known; and if He is the only way by which we can approach God, then manifestly the Scriptures are of deep, vital, and everlasting importance. What more can men want than this blessed volume of the Scriptures? By the simple process of logic we must see that none can lay the Scriptures aside without danger to his soul; for if, as the Apostle St. Paul says, "Jesus Christ is all and in all," and if Christ is the very centre, as He is (or should be) of every Christian Church throughout Christendom, then woe to the man who makes light of Scripture, when the Scriptures are the one medium by which Jesus Christ reveals life and salvation to our souls. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent," says the Saviour. The

one end and aim of all the Scriptures is the knowledge of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, and St. Peter tells us that "no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. i. 20–21).

Hence God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, are all, in every possible way, revealed to man by means of the holy pages of Scripture; and "*every* word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" is to be the medium, or means, by which men shall live. Therefore the Lord Jesus Christ being for us the very centre of every hope and ambition, we draw nigh to the Scripture with this idea, if we are wise, that we are coming to the one and only place in which it is possible for us to discover Him; and with the certainty that if we seek diligently we shall find Him there, and nowhere else.

If this be so, what shall we make of any scheme or so-called religious system that shall declare (1) That it is a dangerous thing for the laity to study the Word of God for themselves, for it is impossible that they should understand it; (2) That the Church gave the Bible, therefore the Church alone can interpret the Bible; (3) That the Church must be accepted as an infallible authority for the interpretation of Scripture; and (4) That the priests alone have power to set forth the truth to those who will listen to what the Church teaches? Yet there are men who say this; and who tell us, moreover, that the Church has a further deposit of truth beyond what is found in the Bible, and that to this men should give heed as being of equal authority with the Scriptures, viz., tradition. They maintain that tradition has brought down to us in an authoritative way the teaching of our Lord and of His apostles; and that it is absolutely infallible, so that in some senses tradition is better than

Scripture; because as the Church wrote the Bible, she should be looked upon as the authority from which all supplies of truth are to be drawn. Now it would be well if those who in our own Church are leaning towards Rome, would listen to the words of the Abbé Migne, who in the prospectus to his edition of the Fathers, tells us (in capital letters) that "out of the innumerable works which constitute the Catholic tradition, he has formed one unique and admirable work, in which he gives us 222 thick volumes of the Latin Fathers, and 167 of the Greek, which constitute in part (not entirely) the authority of the Church." Hence no man can suppose that he has ever entered into the real teaching of the Church until he has studied 389 volumes! The absurdity of such assertions must be patent to all!

From this teaching of tradition we turn, with gratitude to God, to see what the Church of England says; and by the teaching of the Church of England we

mean, of course, the authoritative writings of those who reformed the Church in the sixteenth century ; of those who carefully studied from the very earliest authorities not only what was bequeathed to the Church by Christ and His apostles, but also the expositions which had been left by thoughtful men of the words of Christ and His apostles, and then rejected what was not essential and what was untrue.

And here it would be well to remind those who tell us that *that* is to be received as the truth of God which has been "always, everywhere and by all" (Staley's "Catholic Religion," p. 322) acknowledged for truth, that they cannot be at liberty to throw aside the authority of the sixteenth-century divines any more than that of the Fathers of the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries. What right has any one to say that we are not to accept the dicta of the sixteenth century, and the writings containing truths which were considered essential by those who studied

more carefully perhaps than any others the works of the earliest Christian writers? Who shall dare to tell us that we are to reject the teaching of our blessed Reformers, who gave their lives, many of them, to prove the beauty of Christ, and of Christ alone, as the blessed centre of our hope?

And when we come to consider what the teaching of our Reformed Church is, we find (1) That there is no other Church in Christendom which brings forward in her services so much of God's Holy Word, and orders it to be read always "in the tongue understanded of the people." (2) That every portion of our beautiful Prayer-Book, if not every line of it, is framed almost entirely in the direct language of Scripture, as being the only authority to which our fathers thought fit to turn in framing their Liturgies. (3) That in the Thirty-nine Articles, which contain the authoritative doctrines of the Church of England, there are no less than eleven

which deal directly with the Scriptures (vi, vii, viii, xvii, xviii, xix, xx, xxi, xxii, xxiv, xxxiv), while in others there are allusions to them. The Articles are full of declarations or assumptions of the all-sufficiency of Scripture, and of this as the alone and absolute Court of Appeal. No wonder that they are called by some "The forty stripes save one that are laid upon the backs of the faithful"; no wonder that they are rejected as being injurious and untruthful. But we, who have tasted even a little of "the glorious liberty of the children of God," which has come to us through the pages of that open Bible, ought to realise the intense importance and value of the Thirty-nine Articles, as the direct teaching of the Church's doctrine. Let us remember, moreover, that the Bible, the Prayer-Book, and the Thirty-nine Articles, are the three special books, volumes, or authorities to which every minister of the Gospel has given his solemn adhesion; that he has declared his

absolute belief in them, and his determination never "to teach anything, as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but that which he shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture" (see Ordination Service); and that he has sworn that he will never betray the trust committed to him. Let the laity remember that the clergy are bound by the most solemn oaths to God and man to deal with sacred things, only as they are set forth in the Prayer-Book, and as that Book was framed by the Reformers of the sixteenth century; and remember too that the laity are the judges who have to decide whether the clergy give them the food that they have a right to expect, and who ought to reject what is contrary to God's Word. (4) That there are the Homilies, by which again the clergy are bound; and in them we read the Church's teaching in clear and decided language; nor may it lightly be said that there is in any of them one word contrary to the teaching of God's holy book.

In the first Homily we read: "Unto a Christian man there can be nothing either more necessary or profitable than the knowledge of Holy Scripture: forasmuch as in it is contained God's true word, setting forth His glory, and also man's duty. And there is no truth nor doctrine necessary for our justification, and everlasting salvation, but that is (or may be) drawn out of that fountain and well of truth." . . . "Therefore forsaking the corrupt judgment of fleshly men, which care not but for their carcase, let us reverently hear and read Holy Scripture, which is the food of the soul (Matt. iv. 4). Let us diligently search for the well of life (John iv. 14) in the books of the Old and New Testament, and not run to the stinking puddles of men's traditions (devised by man's imagination) for our justification and salvation." . . . "And as the great clerk and godly preacher St. John Chrysostom said, 'Whatsoever is required to salvation of man, is fully contained in the Scripture

of God.'" . . . "'If it shall be requisite to teach any truth, or reprove false doctrine, to rebuke any vice, to commend any virtue, to give good counsel, to comfort, to exhort, or to do any other thing requisite for our salvation; all those things,' saith St. Chrysostom, 'we may learn plentifully of the Scripture.'" (Homily I., pp. 1–2.)

Then when a minister of the Gospel comes forward to be ordained, this quesis put to him, "Are you persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all Doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? And are you determined out of the said Scriptures to instruct the people committed to your charge, and to teach (or maintain) nothing, as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but that which you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture? *Answer.* I am so persuaded, and have so determined by God's grace." ("Ordering of Priests, and Consecration of Bishops.")

Again, when we turn to the well-known Catechism by Nowell we read: "*M.* Dost thou then affirm that all things necessary to godliness and salvation are contained in the written Word of God? *S.* Yea: for it were a point of intolerable ungodliness and madness to think, either that God had left an imperfect doctrine, or that men were able to make that perfect, which God left imperfect." (Nowell's "Catechism," p. 3.)

And Jewell, in his well-known "Apology," says: "We receive and embrace all the canonical Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament: and we give our gracious God most hearty thanks, that He hath set up this light for us, which we ever fix our eyes upon, lest by human fraud, or the snares of the devil, we should be seduced to errors or fables." . . . "They are the very might and power of God unto salvation: they are the foundations of the apostles and prophets, upon which the Church of God is built: they are the

most certain and infallible rule by which the Church may be reduced if she happen to stagger, slip, or err: by which all ecclesiastical doctrines ought to be tried." (Jewell's "Apology," p. 21.)

Further on we read again from Jewell: "I know not whence it proceeds, whether from reverence, or conscience, or a despair of victory, that these men (Papists) always dread and shun the Word of God as much as a thief does the gallows. . . . They see their cause is suffocated and ruined whenever it comes near the Scriptures, which are a sort of deadly poison to it. Therefore they accustom themselves to call the Holy Scriptures . . . a cold, uncertain, unprofitable, dumb, killing, dead letter; which seems to us to be the same thing as if they should wholly deny them to be the Word of God. . . . These men, pretending that all their innovations were consigned to them by Christ and His Apostles, and desiring they should be accordingly esteemed, lest there should be

anything, anywhere extant, which might contradict these dreams and shams, either burn or suppress the Scriptures, and keep them from the people. . . . We have turned the Holy Scriptures into all languages, and they will scarcely allow them to be extant in any tongue. . . . We venerate the words of the Apostles and Prophets, they burn them." (Jewell's "Apology," pp. 63, 65, 84.)

While in the Homily known as the Homily for Rogation week, we read: "Nowhere can we more certainly search for the knowledge of this will of God (by the which we must direct all our works and deeds) but in the Holy Scriptures, *for they be they that testify of Him*, saith our Saviour Christ (John v. 39). It may be called knowledge and learning, that is otherwise gotten without the Word: but the Wise man plainly testifieth, that 'they all be but vain, which have not in them the wisdom of God' (Wisd. xiii.). We see to what vanity the old philosophers

came, who were destitute of this science, gotten and searched for in His Word. We see what vanity the School-doctrine is mixed with, for that in this Word they sought not the will of God, but rather the will of reason, the trade of custom, the path of the fathers, the practice of the Church. Let us therefore read and *revolve the Holy Scripture both day and night: for blessed is he that hath his whole meditation therein. It is that which giveth light to our feet to walk by.* It is that which giveth wisdom to the simple and ignorant. In it may be found eternal life (Psal. i. 2; cxix. 105; xix. 7–11). In the Holy Scriptures find we Christ (John v. 39), in Christ find we God; for He it is that is the *express image* of the Father (Heb. i. 3). *He that seeth Christ, seeth the Father* (John xiv. 9). And contrariwise, as St. Jerome saith, 'The ignorance of Scripture is the ignorance of Christ.' Not to know Christ, is to be in darkness, in the midst of our worldly and carnal light

of reason and philosophy. To be without Christ, is to be in foolishness: for, He is the only wisdom of the Father, in whom it pleased Him that *all fulness and perfection should dwell* (Colos. i. 19; ii. 3)." (Homily XXIX. part 3, p. 457.)

It is impossible for any honest man to deny that our Articles, together with our Prayer-Book and our Homilies, as also our best and noblest writers, direct us to the Word of God, as being the very centre and foundation of all saving truth, and as conveying to us that knowledge of Christ, and of Christ alone, without which no man can be saved or hope to approach God. Evidently our Reformers of the sixteenth century took immense pains to enforce the study of the Word of God, as being the one and only standard; because for many centuries there had been the overlaying of the holy truth by the traditions of men, and such a cumbrous mass of evil doctrine that men's souls were imperilled, if not destroyed, by what was offered to them

in place of God's truth. The reason is not hard to find. In the early days men were, for the most part, ignorant of all learning; and, naturally, when anything arose of a new kind of revelation, a spirit of inquiry was awakened as to the meaning of it; but as men have always disliked, and been afraid of, exercising private judgment when discussing a question, it was inevitable that they should turn to a human authority for guidance. Consequently, the clergy of the early days became those to whom people looked for the solution of their difficulties, and this gradually developed the idea of the priesthood; from the development of authority in the priesthood there was gradually evolved that sacerdotal system (against which we protest in these days) as being the medium between God and man, by which alone the people could approach their God; and the masses for ten centuries were content to bow, in ignorance, to this rule.

When, however, with the light of print-

ing, men's minds developed irrespective of the priesthood, they naturally began to reject traditions, as interfering with their liberty; and when the light of God came through the Bible, it was immediately seen that the whole sacerdotal system, of a sacrifice for sin to be offered by the priest, of the absolution of man to remove the dark blot of sin, and of the scheme of confession to a human Absolver, would of necessity have been swept away as utterly opposed to the Word of God. Then, as the priesthood could no longer appeal to the unknown pages of God's Word, they felt bound to set up a co-ordinate authority, viz., that of the Church; and as the Church was represented by the man; and the man dominated the whole congregation to which he was called to minister; the people would still have been kept in subordination to the authority, and the will, and the (possibly) bad passions of one man; but our forefathers, who saw this imminent danger, not only swept the old system

away, but called upon all the Church of England to bow to nothing but to God's Holy Word, to make this their study and their daily guide; and they were right, were they not? because, if Jesus Christ is the centre and the object of all true religion, He certainly is of the Gospel scheme revealed in the pages of this Book. If you refer to the pages of God's Word, you will find that all hangs upon a Person —all ceremonial, all right teaching, all human hopes. Alas! that three hundred and fifty years have not yet been sufficient to convince people of this solemn truth, this vital fact—that you must know *Him*, not *it*, as the source of all hope; that you must deal directly with the One Whom the Scriptures so beautifully exhibit to us.

Listen to what Dr. Moule says in his Commentary on the Romans: "That multifarious Book is indeed in this sense one. Not only is it, in its Author's intention, full of Christ; in the same intention it is full of Him for us. Immortal

indeed is its preciousness, if this was His design. Confidently may we explore its pages, looking in them first for Christ, then for ourselves, in our need of peace, and strength, and hope." ("Moule on the Romans," p. 399.) And much more than this has he beautifully said of the Lord Jesus Christ as the centre of everything that constitutes salvation for the family of man.

Once again, then, let me enforce this fact, that our fathers thought it necessary to throw away the accumulations of the dark ages, to declare that the Bible was the one and only thing needful for salvation ; and that man must live by the Word of God alone. "To whom shall we go?" said St. Peter to Christ. "Thou hast the words of eternal life." "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Hundreds of texts should occur to our minds which testify that when we read "Thus saith the Lord," it ought to be enough for our

souls; yet after three hundred and fifty years of light, what is the teaching which now claims to be authoritative in the Church, which was once supposed to live only on the Scriptures? In Staley's "Catholic Religion" we read, "The Protestant sects regard the Bible as the source from which every one may draw his own conclusions as to the truth." (And so it ought to be, unless one would seek for help from a friend more learned than oneself as to the meaning of particular words!) Further, "What is the Anglican standard in regard to the truth?" "The Holy Scriptures are the final authority in questions relating to Catholic truth, the Church being the interpreter of those Scriptures, and that too in the sense in which the Fathers have generally understood them. This is the groundwork of the celebrated rule of Vincentius" (which closes thus): "For the avoiding of error, the Prophets and Apostles must be expounded according to the rule of

the ecclesiastical and Catholic sense." "Again, the Bible is the child of the Church, and it is as wrong as it is impossible to separate the one from the other. If the Scriptures contain the truth, the Church is 'the pillar and ground' upon which the truth rests. For (1) the Church wrote the inspired books which form the Bible. (2) The Church separated the inspired books from other writings. (3) The Church alone can rightly interpret the Bible." (Staley's "Catholic Religion," pp. 115, 117, 319.)

Dr. Pusey says: "What is matter of faith must be capable of being proved out of Holy Scripture: yet that, not according to the private sense of individuals, but according to the uniform teaching of the Church." Again he says: "We acknowledge that Holy Scripture is the source of all saving truth; but it does not therefore follow that every one, unguided, is to draw for himself the truth out of that living well." (Pusey's "Rule of Faith,"

p. 4.) Moreover we read in the *Union Review* for 1867, p. 13, that "The crucifix should be the first lesson book for their (English Home Missionaries) disciples, and the Holy Scriptures must never be put in the hands of unbelievers." Again, the "Bible is not the *sole* and *only* Rule of faith."[1] "Nor is it any infringement of the reverence due to the Bible, as God's Word, to declare openly and distinctly that 'Bible Christianity' is an invention of the devil, having for its object to obstruct and defeat God's Word under the hypocritical pretence of love and zeal for His Word." (*Church Review*, July 12, 1862, p. 427.)

I might read multitudes of other utterances which are now considered authoritative in our land by hundreds and thousands of people. Listen to one other quotation from "Gace's Catechism":

[1] Paper read by Mr. H. W. Hill at a meeting of the Chiswick Branch of the English Church Union, February 3, 1890. Reported in *Church Union Gazette*, May 1890, p. 153.

"The Church's decision gives meaning to the Bible, and the signification of the latter must be modified so as to confirm the Church's view, and this is done without violence or discordance, whereas dissent would wrest the words of Holy Writ to support its own views and opinions apart from Catholic tradition, and supported only on narrow and untenable grounds, leading to ruinous errors." . . . "The Church originates and determines doctrine under Divine inspiration, and Scripture confirms the Church's doctrine and worship in the way of mutual support." "Whence is derived the Christian religion and its form of worship? From the Church, not from the Bible." "Could a worship be derived from the Bible alone? No. To have a worship prescribed by the Church and confirmed by the Bible is one thing; to attempt to build up a worship from the Bible would only lead to, and end in, confusion and disorder." Shall I forbear? Surely I have proved my theory to the

hilt, as to the danger of this teaching, and as to its direct opposition to the formularies of our Church. The end, if not the object, of such teaching will be manifest, viz., that people are being led to believe, that it would be well for us to return to the customs and habits of Rome, and that it is pure bigotry on the part of those who refuse to defer to the teaching of Holy Mother Church.

The men who would rob us of our inheritance cannot prove their points from God's Holy Word, or find any justification there for their teaching. Hence they have to look to the Church of the dark ages, and not to the real, primitive Church of the Apostles or their Lord; and it is no wonder that they need the aid of tradition when you have such words as these of Sadler: "Whilst the Church of England upholds the paramount authority of the Holy Scriptures, she explains these Scriptures in accordance with interpretations which she finds in the very earliest Chris-

tian writers, rather than with interpretations struck out at any later period. Her whole Service-Book is framed on a model to be traced to the remotest times." "This is the reason why we of the Church of England defer to antiquity and early Patristic teaching, without making anything except the written word our standard."—(Sadler's "Church Doctrine," pp. 355–7.)

We answer that we "defer to *no* antiquity" and need no "Patristic teaching," which are not in exact accord with the teaching of Holy Scripture: and I ask you to believe that in that teaching of Scripture we shall find our true joy, our satisfaction, and supply for all our needs.

Shall we close by asking—What then is the Scripture to us? Remember what our Collect says, that God has caused "all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning"; and in this fact He has given to us a splendid responsibility. Woe,

woe to the man who neglects his Bible. I would that time permitted me to read to you the words of a broad High Churchman concerning the neglect of the Bible in so many homes, which he speaks of as one of the dark features of the day. And I could tell you many instances of ignorance of the Bible among people who are supposed to be highly educated. Only a short time ago a person of good position, a nominal Churchwoman, avowed that she had never heard of Nicodemus; and from my own experience in confirmation classes, I know of the ignorance that all too widely prevails. Hence I would pledge my people to the most devoted study of God's Word. For if (1) in God's Word we find Christ and there alone, how sadly must those have wasted and misused the treasure entrusted to them, who have not truly learned to know Him, but have tried to content themselves with a mere formal religion; and if (2) through our humble study of the Scriptures, Christ is ours, and

we are Christ's; if we can say, "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write," and He is our true Saviour; then let no man come between us and our Christ, except as the mere guide to instruct us in things which we desire to understand, and in which he may be better taught than ourselves, yet always in submission to this Book. Christ is "The Truth," and to Him we must go as having "all treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden in Him." Cleave then to the Bible, which will lead you to Him; and when you have found Christ as the true life of your soul, then look to the Holy Ghost, who ever speaks and acts through the words of Holy Scripture, to be "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

III

CHRIST—THE LIFE

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CHRIST—THE LIFE [1]

"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."—ST. JOHN vi. 63.

WITH that Divine Authority which alone constitutes infallibility, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has declared, in the very plainest terms, and in terms of the most vital importance to our souls, that spirit and flesh can never be one. They may exist side by side, but they can never amalgamate; to use His own words in His interview with Nicodemus: "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit."

They are absolutely and completely

[1] Sermon preached by the Rev. Prebendary Webb-Peploe, M.A., 11th December 1898.

diverse the one from the other in their essence and in their properties; so that, while they may both be found in a single individual—as in the case of our Master Himself, and as in the case of every one born of the Holy Ghost—and though the flesh may be pure, as originally constituted by God in the first man, and as, of course, in the Lord Jesus Christ always — yet flesh and spirit are for ever separate in their nature, character, and action.

To speak, therefore, as if they could ever be one, is to forget the simplest principles that attach to a reasonable argument; and this is a point of the very greatest importance to us, when we proceed to consider the subject announced for this morning, namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself alone is "*the Life*" of a man's soul, from the commencement of his spiritual career and throughout eternity. For, it follows that, by no action on the part of a human being, who claims to hold the position of a priest, and who pro-

fesses to prepare the divine food for the human soul, is it possible for the soul to be fed. All that man can deal with or affect is "the flesh" (*i.e.* the natural substances which may be subjected to "touch, taste, and handling"); and material substances can never become the medium of transmitting the spiritual; it is an absolute certainty that if the two are different in essence and action, they can never be amalgamated, so as to become one.

We are not speaking now of "the flesh" in that sense in which St. Paul speaks of it as "the carnal nature and mind of man as opposed to God," or "the natural principle which works in man as contrary to the Holy Ghost"; but we are speaking of two abstract existences, the one spiritual, and the other absolutely material. And we affirm, without fear of contradiction by any reasonable man, that the material can never be made one with the spiritual, or the spiritual

with the material: and, therefore, the flesh can never be made one with the spirit. As long, therefore, as these two remain as God constituted them, it is impossible that the one should be changed into, or be the medium of conveying, the other. Again, in the solemn words of my text, the Master solemnly declares: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth," *i.e.* ministers to the true spiritual life of man; and "the flesh (*i.e.* the material substance) profiteth nothing." This, too, is of vital importance in considering the branch of our subject which is before us this morning, viz., how the spiritual life is maintained and nourished after it has once been bestowed by the Holy Ghost! Is it possible that any material substance should be necessary to the spiritual part of man for its vital support? The Lord says, "The flesh profiteth nothing"; and at the same time, He announces to us that it is the Spirit that alone can minister to and support true life.

Hence I again repeat the declaration, that a material, inanimate substance can never by any possibility become the means of imparting spiritual life, or the medium through which it is communicated to the soul of man. These two are the great fundamental declarations which the Lord Jesus Christ puts before us in our text; and it is to press them in on my hearers that I have chosen these words for consideration.

To do justice to our subject I must invite you to consider for a little while the surroundings of my text, because this sixth chapter of St. John is the one passage to which men generally turn in the writings of modern times, to prove that at the Lord's Supper the priests make bread and wine into God, and that thus they minister spiritual life to the souls of communicants. The question is, Does the Master teach any such doctrine? If we look at the passage as a whole, we find that He is saying to the

Jews, "There is a 'meat which perisheth,' and there is a 'meat which endureth'; but these two are diverse, the one from the other, in every possible way." The children of Israel, their fathers, had received what is called "angels' food" or manna, yet that could not give them everlasting life, and they perished simply because of their unbelief; but now, as He tells them, His Heavenly Father had sent down to them "the bread of God from Heaven"; and that they who received this bread should never perish. The people when they heard this, cried in their ignorance, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." Then the Lord Jesus proceeded to show that that bread was Himself; that He was the true food for the soul, and that He must be taken by faith (ver. 35, &c.); and step by step He made the matter clearer and clearer, notwithstanding the murmurings of the Jews, till at length He declared in verse 53, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except

ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." From that verse onwards He taught them that this spiritual food, or bread was communicated by Himself for the spiritual supply of the spiritual department of man, till at length, perceiving that they did not understand His words, He declared, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

Now there has been constant arguing as regards this climax of the whole subject, as to whether the Lord Jesus is speaking of abstract flesh and spirit, as of two principles opposed the one to the other. Common sense should tell us that He must have been speaking of that which had preceded in the argument; and if so, you will observe that the words of my text have special—I might almost venture to say, absolute—reference to that which concerns Himself, for He has said,

"I am the living bread," "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever," "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." In order to do this, He says, you must believe; faith is the one and only medium; till at last He explains to them that all He has said as to "eating His flesh, and drinking His blood" is not to be taken in any sense materially, for that "the flesh profiteth nothing"; it must be taken spiritually, for that "it is the Spirit that quickeneth." It is as though He said, The words, the very words that I have spoken concerning eating and drinking; the words that I have spoken concerning My flesh and My blood; the words in which I have explained to you that it is only by eating and drinking of the Christ that you can have everlasting life—are all to be taken as spiritual truth: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

This being so, the Lord Jesus Christ

clearly teaches us that (1) There is a natural and there is a spiritual feeding; (2) In this natural feeding there is a token of the way in which the spiritual life is maintained; (3) This spiritual life can only be maintained by feeding on the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "the Bread of Life"; (4) For this, men must partake of His very flesh and of His very blood; but (5) While He was inviting men to partake of His flesh and blood, that flesh and that blood had not yet been given for the life of the world; so that His words could not possibly refer to anything *material.* Thus, it stands to reason that the Saviour is not teaching that we have to partake of the "material," in any sense whatever; but that we must partake spiritually, and by faith, of His own Life as the Bread of God; and that for this purpose He would give His flesh and blood for the life of the world when He died on Calvary's Cross; so that man might be able to partake of what is for

the spiritual life by the Holy Spirit, and by faith—the Spirit on God's side, and faith on man's—the two bringing Divine life and nourishment into the soul; and the man thus receiving that life from God which is both everlasting and spiritual.

But, now we come to inquire whether this can have any reference to the Lord's Supper or the Holy Communion—that blessed feast which was instituted by Christ the night before He died for mankind, as the Light and Life of the world.

There are some who affirm that this passage refers, and only refers, to that Holy Feast, that it has no reference to anything but the Lord's Supper or the Holy Communion; and they maintain, that when the Master says: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood," He was distinctly—if not exclusively—speaking of the Lord's Supper. Hence they affirm that that bread and wine must "become" the flesh and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; and that, there-

fore, when any man comes to the Lord's table, whether penitent or impenitent, he does partake of the Lord Jesus Christ's body and blood to his own salvation or to his condemnation. To meet these assertions, we have to affirm that—

(1) The Lord's Supper had not then been instituted, nor was it until at least a year afterwards; so that if only referring to this, the words of our Lord would have been utterly meaningless to those who first heard them.

(2) Every single person who dies on the face of the globe without partaking of the Lord's Supper at the hands of a priest must perish everlastingly (see verse 53); for if these words apply to the Lord's Supper and to the bread and wine which are there partaken of, then every man is damned eternally who has not been up to the table of the Lord and received the bread and wine at the hands of the priest. An utterly monstrous conclusion, and therefore at once overthrowing the theory!

(3) The Lord was addressing a body of murmuring Jews, while His Supper is clearly provided for, at least professing, disciples.

(4) This view would mean that every one who had eaten of the bread and drunk of the wine must be everlastingly saved (see verse 54); so that even Judas Iscariot must be included among those who "have eternal life" by eating and drinking!

But I need simply appeal to the most ordinary intelligence and ask—Is it in accordance with common sense, is it reasonable, is it possible, that the Master should have meant to destroy every poor soul who by circumstance or necessity had not received the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, and to declare every soul to be saved eternally who, however blasphemous and wicked, had partaken of these? This theory, I think, falls to the ground by its own essential folly, and absurdity!

There are others again who say that the passage has no reference whatever to

the Lord's Supper, and that it must never be adduced as having any reference to that Sacrament. Here again we are met by arguments which are absolutely unanswerable: (1) If it did not refer in any sense to the Lord's Supper, would not St. John have explained to us the fact that the two had no connection? (2) Does it not seem natural that the Lord Jesus Christ should at some time during His life have explained the real meaning of the Sacrament which He afterwards instituted, and which He told us to eat and drink in remembrance of Him? And (3) is there any other passage by which we can explain what is meant by eating and drinking spiritually, except this chapter of St. John's Gospel?

Hence we are driven to the conclusion that it has *some* reference to the Lord's Supper, which was instituted at a later time.

Others hold—and with them I would take my stand—that if it was not spoken distinctly concerning the Lord's Supper,

nor in reference to that feast alone, yet that from the time of its institution these solemn words began to receive their explanation in the Lord's Supper. For these words originally spoken at Capernaum are the Lord's one special revelation concerning the great mystery of feeding spiritually on Him; that is to say, this passage bears so far upon the supper feast in Jerusalem as to be explanatory of it; and that Christ meant His disciples to go back upon these words for an understanding of that Sacrament. The two literally open out each other, the one doing service to the other. As, for example, with regard to the Old and New Testaments—in the Old Testament Christ is *en*folded, in the New Testament He is *un*folded; so in the same way in the argument at Capernaum there is *en*folded the Sacrament, and in the Lord's Supper there is *un*folded by symbols the signification of that spiritual eating and drinking, which are spoken of in this sixth chapter of St. John.

Surely, if we take the two narratives and place them side by side, the discourse at Capernaum and the scene in the upper room at Jerusalem, we shall see at once the exact similarity of terms, and we shall be driven to the conclusion that they must be explanatory the one of the other. Hence we shall be led to accept this thought, that in St. John vi. the spiritual essence of the life is explained, and that in the Sacrament the symbolical idea is offered to us; and thus through the symbols we take the spiritual teaching, and in the spiritual we lose sight of the material.

Thus, then, the Master would make the matter perfectly clear by having deigned in compassion to our human nature to offer us certain signs which explain great spiritual realities; and while the material can never become the spiritual, and the earthly can never convey the heavenly; yet at the same time the symbols are instructive; and a special means of the Lord Jesus' own bestowal, by which the spiritual may

better be realised or appreciated through the outward and visible signs employed.

What the Jews were intended to learn by St. John vi. was, that the man who wishes to live everlastingly must partake of the Lord Jesus Christ's life; and that none can ever have perfect life except as he takes the Christ of God into his soul; and the Christ of God being spiritual, it is an absolute impossibility that He can ever be conveyed to the soul by means of the material. There can be no possible partaking of Christ's flesh and blood in a material sense or by fleshly means (whether in the food or in the acts of the receiver), but *both* must be "spirit" (or utterly worthless)—viz., the thing received and the act of receiving.

It was this that our Reformers so determinedly and solemnly taught us, and for this one end they shook off and rejected all the vain superstitions with which Rome had surrounded the Sacrament of the

Lord's Supper. These are now being re-introduced in our day, and we are driven therefore to inquire carefully—What is the exact teaching upon these points, which was bequeathed to us in the sixteenth century? It was for the affirmation of the very truths which we have now been considering that our forefathers, in the reign of Edward VI., and afterwards in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, threw aside all the superstitions connected with the Mass, and declared them to be "dangerous deceits" and "blasphemous fables," and that no man ought ever again to think that he could receive from the hands of a priest anything to minister spiritual life and nourishment to his soul through the medium of material bread and wine. For this the Reformers gave their lives, and bequeathed to us our beautiful Prayer-Book, our magnificent Articles, our instructive Homilies, and our simple and impressive Rubrics. And if we are

asked, What then is the teaching of the Church of England? let me give you a few quotations. And first, let us ask, What is the doctrine which the clergy have solemnly sworn that they will ever set forth and teach, and never do anything contrary to? Yourselves, the Laity to whom we minister, shall be the judges between the one side and the other, among the clergy of to-day.

Article XXVIII. says: "The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another; but rather it is a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ's death; insomuch that to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same, the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ: and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ. Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of bread and wine) in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ:

but it is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions. The Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped."

Again we read in Art. XXIX.: "The wicked, and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth (as Saint Augustine saith) the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ: but rather, to their condemnation do eat and drink the sign or Sacrament of so great a thing."

And, still further, in Art. XXXI.: "The offering of Christ once made is

that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual: and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifices of Masses, in the which it was commonly said, that the priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables, and dangerous deceits."

Next, what is to be taught to our children in the Catechism of the Church of England according to our only accepted formularies? "Why was the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ordained?" "For the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby." Not a word is there in all these authorities as to the bread and wine "becoming the body and blood of the Lord."

Furthermore, when we look to the Rubric that closes the Communion Service, —"The Black Rubric," as it is generally

called, because it is printed in specially black colours—we read: "It is hereby declared, That thereby (*i.e.* kneeling) no adoration is intended, or ought to be done, either unto the Sacramental Bread or Wine there bodily received, or unto any Corporal Presence of Christ's natural Flesh and Blood. For the Sacramental Bread and Wine remain still in their very natural substances, and therefore may not be adored; (for that were Idolatry, to be abhorred of all faithful Christians;) and the natural Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ are in Heaven, and not here; it being against the truth of Christ's natural Body to be at one time in more places than one."

Again, if we turn to our Homilies for the teaching of the Church of England concerning "the Lord's Supper," as it is there beautifully called, we read: "We must then take heed, lest, of the memory, it be made a sacrifice; lest of a Communion it be made a private eating; lest

of two parts we have but one; lest applying it for the dead, we lose the fruit that be alive." . . . "Let us therefore so travail to understand the Lord's Supper, that we be no cause of the decay of God's worship, of no idolatry, of no dumb massing, of no hate and malice; so may we the boldlier have access thither to our comfort." . . . "For this is to stick fast to Christ's promise made in His institution, to make Christ thine own, and to apply His merits unto thyself. Herein thou needest no other man's help, no other sacrifice or oblation, no sacrificing priest, no mass, no means established by man's invention." . . . "It is well known that the meat we seek for in this Supper is spiritual food, the nourishment of our soul, a heavenly refection, and not earthly; an invisible meat, and not bodily; a ghostly substance, and not carnal; so that to think that without faith we may enjoy the eating and drinking thereof, or that that is the fruition

of it, is but to dream a gross carnal feeding, basely abjecting and binding ourselves to the elements and creatures." . . . "Take then this lesson, O thou that art desirous of this table, of Emissenus, a godly father, that when thou goest up to the reverend communion to be satisfied with spiritual meats, 'thou look up with faith upon the holy body and blood of thy God, thou marvel with reverence, thou touch it with thy mind, thou receive it with the hand of thy heart, and thou take it fully with thy inward man.'" . . . "*M.*—Sayest thou then the mean to receive the body and blood of Christ standeth upon faith? *S.*—Yea. For when we believe that Christ died to deliver us from death, and that He rose again to procure us life, we are partakers of the redemption purchased by His death, and of His life, and all other His good things. . . . As for the prerogative of offering for sins, it pertaineth to Christ alone, as to Him which is the eternal

Priest. . . . For us there is nothing left to do, but to take the use and benefit of that eternal sacrifice bequeathed by the Lord Himself, which we chiefly do in the Lord's Supper." (Homily XXVII., pp. 416, 417, 418, 424.)

Can anything be stronger, I ask, than words such as these taken from our different Church formularies and authoritative statements? Let them only be supplemented by the words in our Communion Office, with which *the officiating minister* (not the *priest*) offers you the bread and wine in remembrance of Christ's death: "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life." "The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life."

Yes! the body broken and the blood shed will "preserve unto everlasting life," but that body and that blood are not in the bread and wine, and this is made

clear by the words which immediately follow: "Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on Him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving." "Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for thee, and be thankful."

No wonder that some now omit to use the latter half of each of these sentences, refusing to give the people the assurance which these blessed words ought to give them: "Feed on Him *in thy heart by faith.*" "Eat this" and "Drink this *in remembrance.*"

Where, I ask, is there to be found in the Services of our Church a sign, a token, a shadow of the doctrine which once was put away as being one of error and superstition, but which is now so widely promulgated throughout our land?

For what are we taught in the present day? and taught so widely that I hardly know where to begin or what writers to select? For instance, let me quote from

Canon Knox Little, who as a preacher is very widely known: "The teaching of Holy Scripture, of the early Church, of the whole living Catholic Church now, and . . . of our own English part of it is, that there is the real presence of the Body and Blood of the Lord, therefore of Himself, His Soul and Divinity, under the form of bread and wine in the Sacrament of the Altar." ("Sacerdotalism," Canon Knox Little, p. 146.) Again, let me ask your attention to the following words: "In the Holy Sacrament of the Altar after consecration by an episcopally ordained priest, there is, apart altogether from the faith or unfaith of those who are present, the real presence of the Body and Blood of Christ, His Soul and Divinity . . . under the form of bread and wine." ("Priest and Altar," p. 41.) "The teaching of the Catholic Church is, that one great object of the Sacrament is to continually present before the Father the offering of the precious Body

and Blood of Christ, really present in a mysterious and sacramental manner (under the form of bread and wine), and to plead thus the merits of His atoning sacrifice offered—in blood and sorrow—once for all upon the Cross, and to apply effectually and with ever-renewed power the saving and life-giving virtues of that sacrifice." ("Priest and Altar," p. 42.) "The Church is exact in this, for you first plead the sacrifice before you feed on the victim." ("Sacerdotalism," pp. 232, 233.)

Once more, in Staley's "Catholic Religion" we read: "The Holy Eucharist is a feast upon a sacrifice. The Body and Blood of Christ are first offered to the Eternal Father, and then partaken of by the communicants." (Staley, p. 247.) Again: "Our blessed Lord ordained the Sacrament of the Eucharist in order that we might be able on earth to plead His sacrifice before the face of God even as He does in Heaven. But beyond this He had a further object in view, and one of

supreme importance, viz., that He might feed our souls with His Body and Blood. (Compare "Priest and Altar," pp. 42, 43.) That we may thus be able to feed upon Him, He has given to His Church authority to consecrate, by the power of His Holy Spirit, bread and wine to become His Body and Blood. When we receive the bread and the wine thus consecrated, we verily and indeed receive His sacred Flesh and Blood." (Staley, p. 254.) Again: "In the Sacrament of the Eucharist, or the Lord's Supper, the Body and Blood of Christ (united to His Godhead), and therefore the whole of Christ, is verily and indeed present, and is verily partaken by us, and verily combined with the sacramental signs" (quoted p. 43 of "Priest and Altar"). Much more might be quoted of the same kind.

Again (and here I speak with great humility, but) I am compelled to say how I differ from his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury in his recent charge.

Listen to his words: "Hooker, undeniably a very high authority on the doctrine of the Church of England, maintains that the Real Presence should not be looked for in the consecrated elements, but in the receivers." His Grace then admits that this is without question the teaching of the Church of England; and yet, immediately afterwards, he adds, "The Church certainly teaches Hooker's doctrine, but to this it must be added that the Church nowhere forbids the further doctrine that there is a Real Presence in some way attached to the elements at the time of consecration and before the reception."[1] With all deference to one so learned and thoughtful, and with all humility I would say, We have yet to understand how a thing can be, and yet not be. Distinctly quoting Hooker he says, That the Real Presence should not be looked for in the consecrated elements; and in almost the

[1] "Charge Delivered at his First Visitation, by the Archbishop of Canterbury," p. 9.

very next sentence he says that the Church nowhere forbids the belief in that Real Presence. I dare to say, while I appeal to the common sense of England, that though his Grace is the author of these two sentences, the one is incompatible with the other; and they cannot both be the truth.

Further, we are taught in "The Priests' Prayer-Book" (p. 15) that these words should be used before the Consecration Prayer: "Most merciful God, look graciously upon the gifts now lying before Thee, and send down Thy Holy Spirit upon this Sacrifice; that He may make this Bread the Body of Thy Christ, and this Cup the Blood of Thy Christ. Amen."

Again, in a little book called "Children at the Altar," which some years ago had reached the twenty-fifth thousand, we read that during the consecration, among other things the children are to say: "I hope, O Jesus, by the virtue of this sacrifice, to overcome all my sins; to persevere in

goodness; to die in Thy favour; and to rise glorious at the last day." Again: "Hail Jesus, King of Glory! Hail, Prince of Peace! Hail, sacred Victim! offered once for us on the Altar of the Cross—and still to be daily offered upon our altars to the end of time. I bless Thee; I adore Thee," &c. And once again: "After the Blessing, remain kneeling while the Blessed Sacrament is being consumed, and say, Blessed and praised be Jesus Christ, on His Throne in Heaven, and in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar." ("Children at the Altar," pp. 28, 29, 33.) But before I close, let me call your attention to what "The People's Mass Book" says. As soon as we open the book we are met with these words:—

"Man or woman, lad or lass,
That would devoutly hear thy Mass,
Good attention give hereto,
That as I bid thee, so thou do.
The worthiest thing, of most goodness,
In all this world it is the Mass.

"For it was made our sins to slake,
And in it, if thou care wilt take,
On every day thou mayest see
The self-same Lord that died for thee,
And in the grave was laid when dead,
In figure and in form of bread."
—Lay Folk's "Mass Book," 13th century.

Again, at the moment of consecration the reader is taught to bow down and say: "Hail, True Body of my Lord Jesus Christ! Hail, True Blood of my Lord Jesus Christ! Prostrate in lowliest devotion, I worship and adore Thee." ("The People's Mass Book," p. 19.)

Once more in "The Church Catechism, with pictures"—a book for little children—when the child has learned the answer to the question Why was the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ordained? it is taught "You see that this Sacrament, which is here called 'The Lord's Supper,' but which the Church of England has also called 'the Mass,' as it is also sometimes called 'the Holy Eucharist,' is a continual re-

membrance, that is, a continual re-presenting and pleading before God of Christ's sacrifice." "The pleading of the priest on earth is concurrent both in time and purpose with that of the great High Priest in heaven. Both plead in their several persons the same blood of the same victim, for the same end, and before the same Almighty Father." ("The Church Catechism, with pictures," pp. 74, 76.)

We have more than proved our point, I fear, without further testimony from books which are now flooding our land—such as "The Ceremonial Guide to Low Mass" and "The Ceremonial of the Altar," &c. &c., in which minute directions are given as to what the priest should do and say! Yet for one moment listen to the words which he is to say secretly when consecrating, or about to partake of, the bread and wine: "May this most holy union of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ be to me and to all who receive it, health of mind and body, and a saving preparation

for worthily attaining unto everlasting life, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." While saying this, he is "making with it the sign of the cross, and placing the small particle of the Host in the Sacrament of the Blood." ("Ceremonial of the Altar," p. 55; "Ceremonial Guide to Low Mass," p. 115.)

These are two books of directions by which all who profess to understand the ritual of the Church of England are day by day to direct their services; and in them the most abject, the most unworthy charges are laid upon men who ought simply to be officiating ministers of the Reformed Church of England.

But let me close with two quotations of a very different order: and first let me give you Bishop Hooper's words. That blessed martyr was surely right when he said: "I believe that all this Sacrament consisteth in the use thereof; so that without the right use the bread and wine in nothing differ from other common bread

and wine that is commonly used; and therefore I do not believe that the body of Christ can be contained, hid, or enclosed in the bread, under the bread, or with the bread; neither the blood in the wine, under the wine, or with the wine. But I believe and confess the very body of Christ to be in heaven on the right hand of the Father, and that always and as often as we use this bread and wine according to the ordinance and institution of Christ, we do verily and indeed receive His body and blood." For these latter words to be consistent with the former part of the quotation, it is perfectly certain that he did not mean to speak of a bodily or material reception, but was simply alluding to a spiritual participation by faith.

And then, to sum up all with words that are far better than one's own—(though I would say, May God give us grace to make them our own "by the faith of the Son of God")—in the words of a sermon preached at St. Paul's Cross by the great

Bishop of Salisbury in the year 1560, where he was speaking after the martyrdom of many of his brethren, "If there be any here that have had, or yet have any good opinion of the Mass, I beseech you for God's sake, even as ye tender your own salvation, suffer yourselves not wilfully to be led away, run not blindly to your own confusion. Think with yourselves; it was not for nought that so many of your brethren rather suffered themselves to die, and to abide all manner extremity and cruelty, than they would be partakers of that thing that you reckon to be so holy. Let their death, let their ashes, let their blood that was so abundantly shed before your eyes, somewhat prevail with you, and move you. . . . Ye have a good zeal and mind towards God —have it according to the knowledge of God. The Jews had a zeal of God, and yet they crucified the Son of God. . . . If ever it happen you to be present again at the Mass, think but thus with your-

selves: What make I here? . . . Christ bade me take; I take nothing; Christ bade me eat; I eat nothing; Christ bade me drink; I drink nothing. Is this the institution of Christ? Is this the Lord's Supper? Is this the right use of the holy mysteries? Is this it that Paul delivered unto me? Is this it that Paul received of the Lord? Let us say but thus unto ourselves, and no doubt God of His mercy will open our hearts. We shall see our errors, and content ourselves to be ordered by the wisdom of God—to do that God would have us do, to believe that God will have us to believe, to worship that God will have us worship. So shall we have great comfort of the holy mysteries; so shall we receive the fruits of Christ's death; so shall we be partakers of Christ's body and blood; so shall Christ truly dwell in us, and we in Him; so shall all error be taken from us; so shall we join all together in God's truth; so shall we be able, with one heart and one spirit, to know

and to glorify the only, the true, the living God, and his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ; to whom, both with the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

IV

NO MEDIATOR OR CONFESSOR BUT CHRIST

IV

NO MEDIATOR OR CONFESSOR BUT CHRIST[1]

"For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus."—1 TIM. ii. 5.

ONE, and one only; and the parallelism is complete between the first and second branches of this remarkable sentence; so that, as there is one, and only one God, so there is one and only "one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." This is strikingly brought out in the original language, εἷς . . . εἷς καὶ; and no student can doubt for a moment that the intention of the apostle is to express to those who read his epistle, that as God stands alone, and is unique in His

[1] Sermon preached by the Rev. Prebendary Webb-Peploe, M.A., 18th December 1898.

own position as God, so Christ Jesus stands alone and is unique in His position as Mediator between God and men. Hence, we have here solid ground for faith and reason to rest upon, coming to us as it does from those same Epistles to Timothy, where we read that, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." If only we could apprehend with heart, and will, and mind, the magnificent force of this Scripture, and act upon it by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, there is nothing to prevent us as Christians from ceaselessly enjoying our holy privilege of dwelling in the very presence of God, of drawing nigh with holy boldness whensoever we will to the throne of grace, and communing with God the Father, through His Son Jesus Christ, who, as the Mediator, the go-between, is seated at the right hand of God, and "ever liveth to make intercession for us."

This, if we rightly understand it, is the Christian's privilege; but now we have to ask with pain, Has any one dared to doubt

that fact? Assuredly, wherever men are called Christians, no body of believers, and no single individual believer, *objectively*, has ever attempted to deny the work of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour of mankind, and His sacrificial work on the Cross; yet on the other hand many have been tempted to deny, *subjectively*, the sufficiency of that Mediatorial work, which Christ has undertaken, and have placed a human intermediary between the Maker and His creatures. They have ignored the fact that Christ is the perfect and complete substitute for man; that in Him man can have the very holiest fellowship with God, without any human or angelic mediation; and that even the vilest may approach the throne of God through Christ Jesus at any moment, without the slightest interference or action by man. Aye! we go further and say, that such action is only a hindrance, if it be anything more than brotherly instruction and prayer.

What then is meant by "a Mediator between God and man"? (1) It implies, of course, the fact of separation between the Creator and the creature; (2) it implies that there is a removable cause of separation, and (3) it implies that the creature can be brought into union with the Creator, so as to produce a sense of judicial satisfaction in the mind of God (if we may dare to use the expression). This separation has been created by sin on the part of the creature; hence, if there is ever to be peace and fellowship and rest between God and man, there must be the absolute removal of sin. It is not that God has ever by one single word manifested Himself as unwilling to receive the creature who desires to approach Him; at the same time it needs only the smallest consideration of the character of God to realise this solemn fact, that if He be what a God should be, it is impossible for Him to look with complacency on evil; and, therefore, it is

impossible for the creature to approach the Creator, the spotlessly pure and holy Creator, until the vileness and sinfulness have been removed. There is such a wondrous holiness in God that the unsanctified creature cannot stand in His presence. Hence, before there can be union, reconciliation, and enjoyment of fellowship, it stands to reason that sin, as the cause of separation must be removed. And the cause of separation, as you will now observe, works in a twofold manner. There is first what is called in theology the objective side of this subject, which argues that sin exists; that it is impossible for man to put it away; and that the work must therefore be done by God, if it is ever to be done at all. Now, blessed be God, the Creator is depicted in His Word as yearning over His fallen creature man; not as turning away from him with bitter wrath and indignation, as so many say concerning their God; but, looking towards the creature

with infinite love, and providing that wondrous sacrifice of His Son which completely atoned for all sins that were ever committed, and literally removed, or "took away," the whole penalty of sin. Christ Jesus the Lord, therefore, came from heaven to be a Mediator in this sense, that He came to make propitiation, satisfaction, or atonement, not only for the *sins* of the whole world, but for the *sin* of the world, as St. John Baptist says; so that while *sins* are completely forgiven to the believer, *sin* is also for ever put away before God. I pray you to recognise that "He hath made Him to be *sin* for us" (*i.e.* sin in the abstract; even all the sin that ever existed), "though He knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Thus sin was once and for ever dealt with in Christ; and the only reason that man is ever lost is because he will not hear the voice of God and believe.

This is the objective removal of the sin

which kept man back from his God; but there must also be a subjective realisation of the work wrought by Christ, or (as St. Paul says) we "receive the grace of God in vain." That is to say, there must be the subjective application to the soul of the work of the Mediator as restoring man to that knowledge of God which the Lord Jesus described as "eternal life" (St. John xvii. 3). Thus, then, the Lord Jesus Christ offers Himself to the soul of each individual to be experimentally what He Himself actually is in the sight of God; and as the soul of each man apprehends the facts connected with its redemption, it ought to be perfectly at one with God, because "God is well pleased for His righteousness' sake." Surely man should be satisfied with what God has accepted! There ought therefore to be no more sense, as there is no more fact, of separation; for as the apostle declares in Rom. viii. 1 that "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,"

so he closes the chapter with that magnificent declaration: "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." "No condemnation," because Christ died; "no separation," because the soul accepts the position. Such is the creed which we trace in the 8th chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

Now the objective hindrance caused by sin is allowed by all who call themselves Christians to have been removed by the death of Christ Jesus; and I know of no body of so-called believers in Christ, and no single Christian, who would ever say that the work of the Lord Jesus Christ is not objectively complete. Even the Roman Catholic with all his ideas of propitiatory sacrifices in the Mass affirms that the work of Christ in itself is complete; and I find

this thought most strenuously affirmed by the sacerdotal party in our own Church, with whom we are compelled to differ on so many points; for they also allow that the work of Christ is judicially complete, as is proved by the letters which they so frequently publish and by the writings of their leaders which are so widely circulated through the country. They do not deny the efficacy of the sacrifice on the Cross; indeed they affirm it: but at the same time they declare that something further is needed for the soul's experimental salvation; for its perfect rest and satisfaction in God; and before it can come with peace and joy into the presence of its Holy Maker.

Observe, therefore, the difference which is made between the objective and the subjective; between the judicial and the experimental. The actual is declared to be complete, and the experimental incomplete; and the declaration is of course in one sense perfectly true. But the Ritualist

declares that to assist the action of Jesus Christ, the intermediary action of the priest by means of confession and absolution, and the help (if not the actual necessity) of intercession by the saints in heaven, are necessary to give the soul that peace, and that access to God, which it is hoping to enjoy.

We stand here however to declare, as students of the Bible, and as upholders of the Church of England doctrine, that the work of Christ is not only complete in itself, but that a true and spiritual apprehension of Christ can make it so complete to the man's own soul, that no matter how vile at one moment, yet at the next, if he take Christ instead of himself, the poor sinner not only has a right to "enter into the holiest" by the blood of Jesus and to stand where Christ pleads his cause with the Father, but to be seated in Christ Jesus on His throne, and to be as near to God as Christ Himself, because by faith he is one with the Lord Jesus Christ;

and this is his position for evermore. From that moment, then, he *need* not and he *ought* not ever to admit the possibility of his requiring any other Mediator than the one, "Christ Jesus the Lord."

Would to God that we all realised the sense of rest and peace, and holy joy which springs from believing the Divine Revelation, and thus could enter into "fellowship with God the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ," as we are invited to by St. John.

But one step further I must carry you, while I affirm that no man can without terrible guilt before God interfere between a soul and its Saviour, and that to declare the necessity of human action in order to to make the union between God and His children perfect is to derogate from the work of the Lord Jesus Christ; to injure the growth of the soul; and to rob it of much of the liberty which God has provided for it in Christ Jesus.

Yet there are those (and not merely a

few, but hundreds, nay thousands of the clergy of the Church of England) who affirm that while the work of Christ is objectively complete, it is not sufficient for men to claim the virtues of Christ's sacrifice, and to approach the Lord's table without the mediation of the priest; but that all laymen need the teaching of the priest to explain the mysteries connected with the bread and wine; and that without the priest's absolution judicially pronounced for sins committed by the poor penitent who kneels before him in the Confessional box, no man can wisely approach the Lord's Table or hope for true peace.

The question then is—What is the teaching of our Bible, of our Church, and of our leading divines? And if what I have sought to declare is not the doctrine of Christ, of the Church, and of our greatest ecclesiastical writers, what is it? But we are being taught to-day that it is necessary for every man, before

he can enter into peace, and before he can approach Almighty God, to have recourse to human intermediaries. Staley in his "Catholic Religion" says: "Confession to a priest is with us restored to its primitive use, for we direct all men always to confess to God, but some also to confess their faults and reveal their doubts to the priest, especially in these three cases:—first, when we are disquieted with the guilt of some sin already committed; or secondly, when we cannot conquer some lust or passion; or thirdly, when we are afflicted with any intricate scruples; particularly whether we may now be fit to receive the Blessed Sacrament or no. It is only upon such private confession, that the soul can receive the direct assurance of pardon which Christ Jesus empowers the priest to pronounce. The form of confession commonly used in this case is as follows: 'I confess to God the Father Almighty, to His Only Begotten Son Jesus Christ, and to God the Holy

Ghost, before the whole company of heaven, and to you my father, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed, by my fault, my own fault, my own most grievous fault; especially I confess that I have committed these sins' (after naming his sins, the penitent will conclude the confession with the words—) 'For these and all my other sins which I cannot now remember, I am heartily sorry, I firmly purpose amendment; I most humbly ask pardon of God; and of you, my spiritual father, I beg for penance, advice, and absolution. Wherefore I pray God the Father Almighty, His Only Begotten Son Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Ghost to have mercy upon me, and you my father, to pray for me to the Lord our God. Amen.' The Church of England invites sinners who cannot otherwise make their peace with God to open their grief (*i.e.* to reveal the sin which causes the grief) before the priest, in order that they may secure 'the benefit of absolu-

tion.' Such confession is called by Bishop Cosin *Sacramental Confession*, and is a blessed privilege open to all who heartily desire it. Our Blessed Lord has given His priests power and authority to absolve from all sins, and He surely meant them to use that power. But before they can fully do so, it is needful that those seeking absolution should confess their sins. Thus we may be quite sure that private confession, as an outcome of real contrition, is a practice well-pleasing to our Lord. We must remember that, strictly speaking, to absolve is not to forgive; God alone forgives. To absolve is to unloose the bonds which sin has placed upon the soul, and to remove the bar to the receiving of grace. In raising Lazarus from the dead, our Lord pronounced the words, 'Loose him, and let him go.' This was the part of the people towards him whom Christ raised. And so God, who pardons the penitent, bids the priest in absolution to loose him and let him go." (Staley's

"Catholic Religion," pp. 269, 270, 271.) Now manifestly this and similar books may be spoken of as authoritative from the multitudes of copies which are circulated, and from the position of the writers; though I have been informed by a clergyman that I only quote those who cannot be considered authorities in the Church. I would humbly ask him whether he looks upon Hooker and our own Archbishop as no authorities in the Church? I ask whether such a book as Staley's "Catholic Religion" does not carry practical authority in our land?

Hear then what is said in an authoritative Guide-book for the young: "To confess is to go to God's priest, and to tell him quite simply, quite openly, all the sins that you remember having committed. . . . It is to the priest that, by God's appointment, you ought now to confess your sins. . . . It is because Christ, when He was on earth, gave to His priests the power of forgiving men their sins." And this is publicly

taught by men who have promised in the most solemn moment of their lives "to teach nothing, as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but that which they shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture." (Ordination Service.) Again: "You must tell the priest *all* the sins that you remember to have committed; God absolutely requires this." We shudder when we think of the lies that have been told, and that clergymen should dare to teach in direct opposition to that which they have sworn to teach. We say it with pain, but we say it boldly, that such men have (though I would fain believe unconsciously) broken their oaths. If clerks in a house of business are bound to be true and faithful in every detail, how much more should God's clergy be faithful to the very letter and spirit of their compact! Again: "Whilst the priest is pronouncing the words of absolution, God, through Jesus Christ, cleanses the soul of the penitent Christian from all sin in the

precious blood of His dear Son; and restores it to the communion of the Holy Ghost, to enable the soul to keep from sin for the time to come; so that after absolution the penitent is pure and shining with grace before the face of God and of His angels. How great a grace, and how happy a moment!" ("Books for the Young—Confession," edited by a Committee of Clergy, 14th thousand, pp. 3, 4, 13.)

Dr. Pusey said: "A confession (*i.e.* to a priest) avails which contains all you can recall. If other sins come back to your mind afterwards, which you would have confessed had you remembered them, they should be confessed afterwards, because the forgiveness is conditional upon the completeness of the confession. Completeness implies that there should be care and faithfulness in discovering sins, and that nothing so discovered should be kept back." ("Hints for a First Confession," by Dr. Pusey, p. 14.)

And again, Staley in his "Catholic Religion," summarising Dr. Pusey's teach-

ing on "Sacramental Confession," says: "Our Blessed Lord has given His priests power and authority to absolve from all sins, and He surely meant them to use that power. But before they can fully do so, it is needful that those seeking absolution should confess their sins. Then we may be quite sure that private confession, as an outcome of real contrition, is a practice well-pleasing to our Lord." (Staley's "Catholic Religion," p. 270.)

Sadler, whose book is considered very authoritative, says: "The two sacraments, and the form of absolution, are alike means of grace, instituted for the consolation and assurance of penitent sinners; and so it seems most unlikely that those sinners who lived in the immediate vicinity of the original Apostles should possess *for a time only*, a means of grace which was denied to all other members of the Church." (Sadler's "Church Doctrine," p. 240.)

Again let me invite your attention to an assertion made at the Bradford Church

Congress by Lord Halifax, who, as president, represents 4700 clergy and 27,000 laity, who are members of the English Church Union: "The laity will not acquiesce in the abandonment of this ancient ritual of the Church, which they have learned to love. They will not consent to be deprived of the opportunities for attending a daily celebration of the Holy Eucharist. They will not tolerate being deprived of the means for communion when they are sick, or, in the case of any sudden emergency, secured to them by the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. *Nor will they stand the discouragement of the practice of habitual confession.*" And this is accepted widely as representing views in accordance with the teaching of the Church of England. I leave you to judge whether this can be said with justice and truth.

But now let us turn to ask what all this springs from, and the explanation of Dean Farrar will sum it up in a few words:

"Auricular confession is the natural result of sacerdotal encroachment and sacramental materialism; and if the once-Protestant laity of the Church of England can look on unmoved and see this practice—which has in all ages been prolific of the worst evils—re-introduced among them, it can only be either because they have been driven into contemptuous indifference by having been first betrayed, and then reduced to helplessness, or because they look elsewhere than to the Anglican Church for freedom and for truth." ("Undoing the Work of the Reformation," p. 9.) I could quote much more that is of value from the Dean's article, but time will not permit me to do so.

We can only stay to inquire as to the results of such teaching. Strange to say—when we speak earnestly on this subject, we are told that the mischief is but small, and that the thing will die out of itself. Yet one clergyman alone has declared that he knows of 1200, and he believes there are

at least 1500, priests who are regularly receiving confessions from members of the Church of England; and that these clergy expect that nobody should attend the Holy Communion without coming to confession at least once a month.

If you want further proof of the extent of this mischief, let me call your attention to a little book called "Hints to Penitents," in which I ask you to notice the following: "Those persons who imagine or say evil things against confession have no idea of what a Catholic priest is; they think of him only as a man like unto themselves, and judge of him accordingly. They forget or disbelieve the fact that he is set apart for a special work with special help to perform it," *i.e.* he can forgive sins, &c. ("Hints to Penitents, by a Priest," p. 68.) Again: "Note down every sin that you remember, taking plenty of time to think over your past life. Confess all to God slowly and humbly. Then make the same

confession afterwards to the priest. A first confession takes more time than an ordinary one. You need not mention your name to the confessor. As regards the Seventh Commandment—sins of impurity—note and confess whatever sins conscience tells you you have been guilty of. Take two Commandments a day, and note down all you have to confess by Friday. On Saturday you can copy it out properly, and look through and try to make the confession as perfect as possible. On Sunday you can offer it to God at the celebration, and on Monday you can receive the priceless benefit and comfort of 'absolution'." ("Hints to Penitents.")

Once again let me quote a verse or two from one of their widely-circulated hymn-books—

> "Yes, I am going to God's Priest,
> To tell him all my sin,
> And from this very hour I'll strive
> A new life to begin.

When I confess, with contrite heart,
My sins unto the priest,
I do believe that from their guilt
That moment I'm released.

I go then with a humble heart,
To have my sins forgiven;
And angels, while I kneel, will sing
A hymn of joy in heaven."

—*Manual of the Children of the Church*, p. 40.

Is it unkind to read all these extracts? God knows how much it pains the preacher to do so, but it seems necessary to show how close are the links between this teaching and that of the Church of Rome. Hear for instance these words, and judge what they may lead to: "The labourer is worthy of his hire, and those who minister to us in spiritual things should reap the benefit of our carnal things, *i.e.* our worldly substance, our money. As there is no fee for hearing confessions, gratitude requires that we should at least contribute either to the offertory or to alms-box whenever we make use of the

Sacrament of Penance; especially we should make a point of this when we confess at a church which is not our own parish church." ("How to make a Good Confession," p. 14.)

But let us now turn from mere human language to consider briefly the expressions of Scripture which are brought as proofs of the ritualistic theory. Let us look first at the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and very urgently are we bidden to consider the force of such passages as St. Matt. xvi. 19, and xviii. 18; but in these passages there is no power given to any individual as a priest; power is simply conferred upon the messengers of Christ to declare God's way of salvation, and the penalties which attach to a rejection of the Gospel.

Again, we are referred to St. John xx. 22, 23. But it has been clearly shown by Bishop Westcott that that passage answers to St. Luke xxiv., when women were almost certainly present; so that women

possess this power, whatever it may be, exactly as much as men. There is one other text to which we are frequently referred, "Confess your faults one to another" (St. James v. 16); but listen to the beautiful words of our "Homily on Repentance": "Indeed besides this there is another kind of confession which is needful and necessary. And of the same doth St. James speak after this manner, saying, 'Acknowledge your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be saved' (James v. 16). As if he should say, Open that which grieveth you, that a remedy may be found. And this is commanded both for him that complaineth, and for him that heareth, that the one should show his grief to the other. The true meaning of it is, that the faithful ought to acknowledge their offences, whereby some hatred, rancour, grudge, or malice, have risen or grown among them one to another, that a brotherly reconciliation may be had, without the which nothing

that we do can be acceptable unto God, as our Saviour Jesus Christ doth witness Himself, saying 'When thou offerest thine offering at the altar, if thou rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thine offering and go and be reconciled; and when thou art reconciled come and offer thine offering" (Matt. v. 23, 24). It may also be thus taken, that we ought to confess our weakness and infirmities one to another, to the end that, knowing each other's frailness, we may the more earnestly pray together unto Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, that He will vouchsafe to pardon us our infirmities, for His Son Jesus Christ's sake, and not to impute them unto us, when He shall render to every man according to his works. And whereas the adversaries go about to wrest this place, for to maintain their auricular confession withal, they are greatly deceived themselves, and do shamefully deceive others: for if this text ought to be under-

stood of auricular confession, then the priests are as much bound to confess themselves unto the lay-people, as the lay-people are bound to confess themselves to them. And if to pray is to absolve, then the laity by this place hath as great authority to absolve the priests, as the priests have to absolve the laity." . . . Again, "Where that they do allege this saying of our Saviour Jesus Christ unto the leper, to prove auricular confession to stand on God's Word, 'Go thy way, and shew thyself unto the priest' (Matt. viii. 4); do they not see that the leper was cleansed from his leprosy, before he was by Christ sent unto the priest for to show himself unto him? By the same reason we must be cleansed from our spiritual leprosy, I mean our sins must be forgiven us, before that we come to confession. What need we then to tell forth our sins into the ear of the priest, sith that they be already taken away?" ("Homily" XXXII., Part ii. pp. 504, 505.)

Further we are told that the theory of confession to a Priest being necessary, is upheld by the authority of our Church; but Article 25 says plainly that "Penance," together with four other things "commonly called sacraments" by the Church of Rome, "are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel, being such as have grown partly of the corrupt following of the Apostles, partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures."

Again the Exhortation in our own beautiful Communion Service is appealed to. Where any one who cannot quiet his own conscience previous to receiving the Holy Communion, but requires further comfort or counsel, the minister is directed to say: "Let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned minister of God's Word, and open his grief, that by the ministry of God's Holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice." Many point triumphantly to this invitation and

say that it refers to priestly absolution, when it clearly says "that by the ministry of God's Holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution." Nor is there a line in the whole of the Communion Service that can honestly be construed as pointing to the duty or wisdom of making confession to man, or receiving absolution from man.

Lastly, there is that service, which has been so much maligned, and which doubtless presents certain difficulties, namely, "The visitation of the sick." There we read that the sick person may be moved to make a special confession of some particular sin, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter, and that when he shall have done this, the priest shall, if so desired by the sick person, say: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to His Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in Him, of His great mercy forgive thee thine offences," &c. But what

is the very next thing that the clergyman is required to do? He must immediately proceed to offer prayer, in these words: "O most merciful God, who according to the multitude of Thy mercies dost so put away the sins of those who truly repent that Thou rememberest them no more: Open Thine eye of mercy upon this Thy servant who most earnestly desireth pardon and forgiveness . . . and forasmuch as he putteth his full trust only in Thy mercy, impute not unto him his former sins." How can he pray for the forgiveness of sins if the sins be already removed by his absolution? The two things cannot possibly be made to agree. The whole argument or claim therefore for Priestly Power, falls to the ground, if founded upon this service.

Shall we go one step further? We are taught that the intercession of saints is a special comfort and help when we come near to the Holy Table: "Joining in communion with and reverently commemo-

rating first the glorious and ever Virgin Mary, Mother of our God and Lord Jesus Christ, and also Thy blessed apostles and martyrs, Peter and Paul . . . Cletus, Clement, Sixtus, &c., and of all Thy saints, by whose merits and prayers do Thou grant that in all things we may be defended by the help of Thy protection, through the same Christ our Lord." ("Ceremonial of the Altar," p. 46.) Once again: "Receive, O Holy Trinity, this oblation which I, a miserable and unworthy sinner, offer in honour of thee (a small t) and of Blessed Mary (a capital B and M), and of all thy saints for my sins and offences, for the salvation of the living and the repose of all the faithful departed." This "the priest shall say secretly." ("Ceremonial Guide to Low Mass," p. 86.)

And this is to be called an honourable performance for a clergyman of the Church of England! Inevitably one false doctrine leads on to another. Confession leads to intercession of saints, and intercession

of saints leads to the Roman doctrine of purgatory. But once again we read in another manual: "When we have examined ourselves, and made our confession, and received absolution, and kept our fast, we go to our Communion, and what happens then? We go to the altar and kneel down, and the priest comes to us with the Blessed Sacrament. We receive that which looks like bread, and which tastes like bread; we receive that which looks like wine, and which tastes like wine; but that which we receive is the body and blood of Christ; it is Jesus Himself, it is Almighty God." ("A Book for the Children of God," p. 129.)

Another volume tells us there is to be a fee, though it is not called a fee, but a charitable gift. And thus we are to be brought back to the sale of spiritual life, and to the delivering of souls from perdition by the payment of money!

In the face of all this, what does the

Church of England say? First, shall I offer you the words of our own Archbishop, who has in a recent pronouncement used these words upon Confession: "The objection to such a system is not very difficult to trace. The first, and perhaps the greatest, is the want of freedom. . . . Closely connected, as is obvious, with the surrender of all moral and spiritual freedom under a system of this kind, is the decline of moral and spiritual activity. . . . Outside of all these lies the risk of interference with the sacred privacy of domestic life." ("Archbishop's Charge," 1898, pp. 20, 21.) But on the other hand we have one of our bishops (the Bishop of Lincoln), within a week of the Archbishop's utterance, publicly using these words: "Here I am constrained to ask two plain questions—(1) Which is the more honest clergyman of the Church of England, the one who, promising to teach the Prayer-Book, tells the sick man of confession and absolution, or the one who does not? (2) Which is the braver and

the kinder priest, the one who, meaning in honesty to tell the sick man of the pardon which he may have, waits till a burning fever or wasting consumption has made reasoning impossible, or the man who teaches this doctrine plainly to his people when they are in health and capable of understanding it, and availing themselves of it, if, and when they need it? I do not forget the great difficulties which beset us in this grave matter; but now that our attention is being publicly called to the teaching of the Prayer-Book, it is but right that we should consider both our defects as well as our excesses; and many faithful parish priests must, I am sure, deeply regret the unsatisfactory vagueness of much of their visitation of the sick, and their inability to use the Office which our Prayer-Book has provided, and which we have promised to use." In the face of these words we have the opinion of all the Bishops of the Convocation of Canterbury who were

present in July 1873; who evidently saw the dangers which were coming on the Church, and said: "In the matter of Confession, the Church of England holds fast those principles which are set forth in Holy Scripture, which were professed by the Primitive Church, and which were reaffirmed at the English Reformation. The Church of England, in the 25th Article, affirms that penance is not to be counted for a Sacrament of the Gospel; and, as judged by her formularies, knows no such word as 'sacramental confession.' Grounding her doctrine on Holy Scripture, she distinctly declares the full and entire forgiveness of sins, through the blood of Jesus Christ, to all who bewail their own sinfulness, confess themselves to Almighty God, with full purpose of amendment of life, and turn with true faith unto Him. It is the desire of the Church that by this way and means all her children should find peace. In this spirit the forms of Confession and Absolution are set forth

in her public services."[1] Our Church has spoken; our Lord has spoken; our own souls should speak; and while I am grieved to have been compelled to bring forward these subjects in the pulpit, I appeal confidently to all true Churchmen to decide between the two parties in our Church, and I beg all whom I can reach to claim for themselves that glorious liberty that is in Christ Jesus, and to keep our beloved Church of England free from the bondage and superstition of Rome. But while I have felt solemnly bound to contend for the truth, my last word should rather be a word of encouragement. If you have such a Mediator, if you may come right up to the throne of God in Christ Jesus, oh! use your privilege; put away the sins you know of, and ask God to put away what

[1] Report of the Committee of the Upper House of Convocation of the Province of Canterbury, being a Committee of the whole House, appointed on the 9th May 1873, to consider and report on the teaching of the Church of England on the subject of Confession.

you know not of. Then rest in the Lord, love the Lord, live to the Lord; and by the grace of God you shall hereafter be with the Lord for ever in heaven, through "Jesus Christ, the One Mediator between God and men."

V

A TYPE OF ANGLICAN SERVICE

V

"THE QUESTION OF MAINTAINING A TYPE OF ANGLICAN SERVICE, AND THE LIMITS OF POSSIBLE VARIATION"[1]

By "A Type of Anglican Service" we of course understand "a service which is essentially and peculiarly English"; and, by the mere use of the expression as applicable to our own Church, we claim at once that she is the Church of the Nation, and should in all things represent, and be for the good of, the English-speaking people, as a whole.

Whatsoever is foreign, or repugnant, to our national instincts should, so far as possible, be avoided or put away; and what-

[1] A Paper read at the Church Congress, London, October 12, 1899.

soever accords with, or develops, those instincts may, so far as it appears profitable, be encouraged by those in authority —provided always that the limits of charity, decorum, and general utility be observed. Here at once then we see that, even on grounds of policy and propriety, no "variation" from the normal "type" can be possibly admitted which does despite to the moral, and devotional, instincts of the nation or its branches.

In our thesis it is happily assumed that we possess such a "Type of Service"; for the question raised is not as to the formation, or the development, but as to "*the maintenance*, of a Type of Anglican Service."

Assuming, then, that we are indeed "the Anglican Church," or "Church of the great English-speaking people in all parts of the earth," we assert, without any fear of solid or reasonable contradiction, that within the borders of "The Book of Common Prayer," and there alone,

do we find "*The* (*only*) *Anglican Service*" which true Churchmen may adopt in the public worship of our Church—and *that*, not merely as a "type" or "pattern" on which other developments may be grafted, but as the exact *form* from which no real advance or declension is lawful.

The "service" (by which I understand all the separate parts which go to make up one whole) is essentially "Anglican"; for it is of a "type" peculiar to this nation and people. To some minds this is a matter for regret, and almost of shame, as interrupting what they describe as "The Claims of Continuity"; but to most of us, I hope, it is a cause of profound congratulation that the divinely-taught leaders of the great and glorious Reformation were moved to frame our Liturgy, or Service Book, on the lines which it now displays. With what wonderful wisdom were our forefathers guided —(1) To reject the Roman accretions and superstitious usages, which marred the simplicity of Divine worship, as carried out

by the earliest (rather than the early) Church; and to revert to the archetype of Christian service, in place of the type of Ethiopia, Rome, or Constantinople! (2) To preserve "whatsoever things were true, whatsoever things were honest, whatsoever things were just, whatsoever things were pure, whatsoever things were lovely, whatsoever things were of good report" in the Hereford, Sarum, or any other "Use"; and (3) To combine simplicity with dignity in such a wondrous degree, as exactly to suit the genius of the Anglican race, and yet to refine and ennoble it, by the service which they provided.

The type is distinctive as being *our own*, in every sense of the word; and while it is "Protestant" in the deep and noble sense of that expression (in that it affirms everywhere the saving power of God's Word as against superstition and error), yet is it "Catholic" in the grand and spiritual sense of that term (in that it sets forth so clearly

and without reservation the great fundamental truths of the Gospel, through which alone men can be saved); and "God forbid (will I trust be the heartfelt prayer of this representative gathering) that, in regard to the type of her *Service Book*, the Anglican Church should ever know any real or important variations." It is a treasure-house of God-given wisdom and beauty, and while in every way suited to the spirit and taste of our nation, is unquestionably the purest and most spiritual production that the world has ever seen—outside the pages of God's Holy Word! All that is required, both from ministers and people, is loyalty to the Prayer-Book in every detail of their "services"; and then there will be no real question as to "maintaining," *in essentials*, "the type of Anglican service" bequeathed to us by our fathers.

And yet the question is neither idle, nor unimportant, as to "the limits of possible variations." *Tot homines, tot sen-*

tentiæ—and it is impossible that, with diverse tastes and diverse lines of education, men should universally be bound to one particular method of expressing, or carrying out, their belief—even where that belief is one and the same. Of course, if we are not at one upon fundamentals we have no rightful place in the Church of England! She is founded upon God's Word, which is "One"; she glories in the continuity of her faith from the time of our Lord and His Apostles; and they whose doctrines, or opinions, have no clear authority from God's Word (by which we mean the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and not merely the types and shadows of the Law) should evidently find their home in some other Church than the Anglican.

Where then, it will be asked, can there be room for "*variations*"? Certainly not in regard to doctrine, for *there* all should be as one! But when we turn to speak of "Ritual," or The rites and

ceremonies connected with worship, the case is far different, and the greatest tenderness should be shown. It will doubtless be granted by all here present, that public worship without ritual of some kind is an impossibility ; nor would any reasonable Churchman wish that the ritual connected with the public services of our Church should be otherwise than dignified and worthy of the occasion ; but the more that "ritual" is declared to be the outward expression of doctrine, and the more that the mechanical is considered as a medium for the transmission of the spiritual, the more jealously must every true Churchman (and especially our spiritual leaders, the Bishops) refuse to permit any rite, or ceremony, in our churches which is supposed to exhibit or express any doctrine, or opinion, not distinctly taught in the Prayer-Book and found in God's Holy Word.

To quote from a leading article of "*The Times*" of September 27th in this year,

where they are discussing a communication from the Archbishop of the West Indies, upon the ritual controversy of to-day: "To a reasonable use of external adornments in worship, no objection would be felt by any one if (as the Archbishop points out) they could be separated from the idea that they are parts of an organised plan for reviving long discarded mediæval practices, and for bringing about an approximation to Roman methods."

But honest Anglican Churchmen will never submit to the re-introduction of superstitious ceremonial which is distinctly intended to assimilate our services to those of the renegade Church of Rome—from which by the goodness of God we have been so graciously delivered. For instance, there should be nothing *ad*mitted, or *per*mitted, in "the Supper of the Lord" which (in the words of our 28th Article) "cannot be proved by Holy Writ"—nothing that "is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture," nothing that "over-

throweth the nature of a Sacrament, and giveth occasion to superstitions."

We desire no antiquarian research for long-buried rites, by which "the simplicity that is in Christ" was for ages lost to the nations; nor should there be permitted in any Anglican Church the re-introduction of those "rusty tools of Romanism" (to adopt a telling phrase of the late Mr. Gladstone) "which have been refurbished and paraded anew (in this land) when they were fondly thought to have been disused." (The Vatican Decrees, p. 1.)

A National Church should *of course* be comprehensive and tolerant; but the Anglican Church can no more "comprehend" the Roman doctrines and practices of *the Mass* than she could admit into her sanctuaries the fetish worship of the Barbarian of Africa, or the standards of Mahomet, the false Prophet of Arabia!

To every loyal son and daughter of the Anglican Church "The offering of Christ once made is so perfect a redemption,

propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual," that "the sacrifices of Masses in which it is commonly said that the priest doth offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt," must appear "blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits"; and no ornament, rite, or ceremony, should be adopted in Anglican Churches which tends in any way to teach that in the Holy Communion there is, or can be, any sacrifice for sins.

Liberty then we preach; but it must be liberty that is lawful; and when we say that liberty must always be subject to law, and that this is the true limitation to which all Christians must submit, we of course *include* Acts of Parliament or the law of the land, by which every citizen (Christian or otherwise) is absolutely bound. Yet would we far rather (if it were possible) turn altogether from the idea of compulsion, and press chiefly (if not only) for

attention to that "Law of Truth" of which the prophet Malachi speaks, as found "in the mouth" of every true Priest and Levite (Mal. ii. 6), and which in these matters, if it does not affect the lay members of the Church, yet assuredly binds every ordained minister of that Church—to teach and exhibit no other doctrines or practices, but such as are found in God's Holy Word, or are in strict accordance with the teachings and formularies of our Church as exhibited in her Service Book and *her Articles of Religion!* His Majesty's declaration which precedes the Articles makes this perfectly clear to all honest minds.

But (to adopt once more the words of Mr. Gladstone in his Article on "The Evangelical Movement"; and to apply his words *practically* to the end that he is proposing, viz., "the best performance of the work of love")—"Herein there is opened to us a noble competition, wherein, each adhering firmly to what he has

embraced humbly, we may all co-operate for the glory of God with a common aim; and every one according what he asks, and according it as freely as he asks it, all may strive to cultivate the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace."

Or to use the words of the late Bishop Cotton of Calcutta: "If we will obey one Guide, and listen to one Voice, we shall be safely brought together when our life's voyage is over, never again to be separated, never to wrong, or grieve, or misunderstand each other, but to be holy and happy for ever in our Father's Home."

Much is said in these days with regard to the liberty that should be allowed; and when doctrine is *not* involved, I hope we should all of us agree that the greatest possible latitude should be permitted (*consistent*, as before said, *with charity and common sense*); but where doctrine is supposed to be taught by externals, there "the limits of variation" seem to be absolutely settled by our Prayer-Book.

Vain is it (we humbly think) for any man to say now, that "Omission is not Prohibition, and therefore it is lawful and right to re-introduce all the ceremonies which were in use in the first year of Edward VI." We have been clearly and wisely reminded by our two Archbishops in their "Opinion"—that "whether omission is prohibition it is not necessary for us to consider. But Prohibition is Prohibition, and nothing can be clearer than the words used in the Act of 1559 prohibiting the use of any ceremony *not ordered* in the Book." And when the Act specially declares that "all and singular ministers shall be bounden" to carry out all the Services of the Church—"in such order and form as is mentioned in the said Book (of Common Prayer) so authorised by Parliament in the fifth and sixth year of King Edward the Sixth—and *none other or otherwise*," their Graces see (and every one of us will agree with them) that "these

latter words are *clearly meant to exclude all variations.*"

Here then we have reached the definite answer to our inquiries. The Anglican *Service Book* is the only lawful court of Appeal, both as regards doctrine, *and* the "type of service" to be set forth in the Church of England, and while no man would wisely interfere with his neighbour who prefers that his church should be more, or less, "magnifical"; that there should be more or less music during Divine service; or that the officiating minister should be robed in black, or in white, when he preaches; yet it is clearly the duty both of the leaders *and* the congregations of our Church to present this much of uniformity in all public worship—that "the type of Anglican service" presented to us in our Prayer-Book be loyally, generously, and lovingly adhered to; that no "variations" be admitted which can for one moment imply that men wish to go behind the Reformation Settlement for their type;

and that "no man go beyond and defraud his brother" of the rights and privileges which were secured to the whole Church by the Act of 1559; while in all things which are *not* expressive of particular doctrine, we bear and forbear to the utmost possible extent. Then, indeed, may we hope that, without dull uniformity of externals, the true "Unity of the Spirit" may be seen pervading the Anglican Church; and that, instead of being obliged (as we have some of us felt lately) to "contend" against zealous and earnest men "for the faith once delivered to the saints," we shall know no other strivings than those of "love to the brethren,"—yearnings over the lost,—and personal consecration to the one Lord, and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

VI

SHOULD THERE BE A ROUND-TABLE CONFERENCE ON RITUAL?

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THIS question was discussed at the London Diocesan Conference on Wednesday, May 16, 1900, when the following Resolution was brought forward by Prebendary Webb-Peploe: "That this Conference consider the desirability of requesting the President to appoint a Round-Table Conference on Ritual, for the purpose of ascertaining—

(1) What agreement about principles exists.

(2) Where differences begin.

(3) What is their exact nature."

The Resolution was supported in the following terms:—

It will be observed that the Resolution

is interrogatory and not affirmative in form. This was specially intended, and I invite attention to that fact. It was my object and hope to discover by this preliminary inquiry whether there are any grounds for believing that such a Conference as is spoken of will conduce to practical and beneficial results.

It goes without question that when Christian men differ there should be a desire to produce reconciliation if possible, and I know few things that are more solemnly laid on my heart—as I believe on Lord Halifax's and his friends' hearts —than the wish to discover some common basis upon which the Church of England may carry out her magnificent possibilities for the benefit of mankind without the continuation of the present unseemly divisions and strife.

We must all yearn and pray for that true "unity of the spirit in the bond of peace" which, individually, we are doubtless seeking as we desire to walk in true

"righteousness of life." Yet as a body we are torn and rent asunder to such a degree that our work for the Master is sorely hindered, and the world scoffs at our so-called "oneness in Christ Jesus." What, then, we ask ourselves—half in despair—can be done? We have tried litigation and that has failed. Men have written articles to the newspapers, one against another, and that has only increased the bitterness between them. We have appealed to Parliament, and it has produced practically no result. We have gone to the Archbishops and have asked them to give us their opinions. They have given us those opinions, but what has been the result? After all, we seem just as sorely divided as ever, and the wall of separation seems (at least on many points) to be growing higher and more solid every year we live. "These things ought not so to be."

But where shall we look for the remedy? Of course, in the first place, to Almighty

God, in humble and earnest prayer. Secondly, to the individual conscience acting under the light of God's Word and the Church's standards. But, thirdly, there has appeared to some to be one untried door of hope, and to this our anxious hearts have turned again and again. I mean the attempt at conciliatory councils, and it is to inquire whether, in the minds of this Conference, such an idea seems prudent and hopeful, that this Resolution has been humbly brought forward, and will be spoken to by Lord Halifax and others from their point of view. Brotherly discussion seems the last possible hope.

Now it is perfectly certain that if the Round-Table Conference is to be held with the idea of any good and practical issue, there must be plain, straightforward expressions of opinion by those who meet, with a readiness to give a reason for the opinions expressed. In such a Conference there must be no blinking of the

questions at issue, no unkind expressions of dissent, or objection to the statements made by any man, however startling they may appear. This, I am confident, will be conceded by all. May I not ask for the same generous, brotherly kindness to-day? We are not, of course, to discuss to-day the crucial questions of ritual and doctrine, which will engage our attention at the Round-Table Conference if appointed, but we are bound to inquire whether there is the least use in summoning such a Conference. And to do this you must necessarily use Saxon of the plainest possible character, so as to exhibit to each other the grounds on which, as at present advised, such a Conference appears to some of us almost an empty vision of hope.

Let me quote Lord Halifax's words in his speech at a Meeting of the E.C.U. on December 14, 1898. He said: "Remember it is no mere question of ritual. It is a strife not of words, but of prin-

ciples." And for this reason I gladly accept Chancellor Smith's Amendment to introduce after "ritual" the words "and the doctrines involved therein," although I personally should have thought that in such an assembly as this every one would recognise "ritual" as intended for the expression of doctrine. This has again and again been asserted by those who adopt a high ritual, and although the late Archbishop Benson in his Lambeth Judgment seemed to say that there was no doctrinal import in some of the things spoken of, his Grace was almost immediately informed through the organs of the Press that not one particle of the ritual adopted was without its doctrinal significance and importance. Where, then, before we begin to discuss principles of ritual, shall we look for agreement upon the principles which are to guide the discussion?

This, I take it, is the question for to-day—can we find a common basis on

which the real arguments shall be founded? For instance—

(1) Will all agree that, as members of the Church of England, the clergy must use the formularies of that Church, and no others, and that they must be loyally used by all without evasion on either side?

(2) Will all acknowledge themselves bound by the Acts of Uniformity, and will all agree that the decisions of the Queen in Council are binding upon the consciences of all Churchmen, and must be obeyed?

(3) Will all bind themselves before entering upon the Conference to uphold and carry out at least such a rendering of the Thirty-nine Articles as shall by common agreement be given to the actual words of those Articles?

(4) If ritual be distinctly meant for the expression of doctrine, will all agree at the outset that no ritual is admissible but such as is acknowledged to be the expression of doctrines distinctly accepted at the

Reformation and expressed in our Formularies?

And, lastly, although other questions will, of course, have to be decided, and I am only raising specimen difficulties which meet us at the very door of the discussion —will all agree that the Church of England, being an Established Church, can know nothing of any compromise which evades or overthrows that law by which every member of the Church is bound in a double sense—first, as a citizen, and, secondly, as a Christian?

Without some kind of agreement on these points before the Conference commences, I humbly confess that I see no real hope of its leading to good; but I fear that it will only add another to the abortive efforts of the past, and, in view of this, I should really pray God that it might not be held.

But is there ground for expecting such agreement of principle as a basis? Let us hope even against hope, and plead for

honest consideration of the position, and when once the needful boundaries of the discussion have been traced, let me say how earnestly I hope that no irritating restrictions may be imposed either upon principles or upon practices. I heartily endorse the words of the late Sir Joseph Napier, spoken when a member of the Ritual Commission in 1867: "Whatever my own particular leanings may be," he said on one occasion at the National Club, "I do admit that the National Church was, and is, bound to provide for many peculiarities of individual apprehension, looking, however, at the same time to substantial and standard truth."

But with full belief in the sincerity and devotion of those from whom I differ, I am driven with pain to inquire where can there be hope of agreement until the language of the high Ritualists has been modified, if not wholly withdrawn? Take the words of the *Church Review*, in its issue of May 3, 1900: "One word of

counsel," it says, "we will in all earnestness venture on to those clergy who practise Reservation in any form. Sit still, go on quietly as you are. Make no protests, either public or private. Do not write to your Bishop. If your Bishop should issue a public pastoral, take no notice of it. Receive it in respectful silence. Wait until he writes to you as an individual and demands that you give up Reservation. Then simply write and say, with all possible respect, that you are entirely unable to comply, that you are bound to obey the Church rather than an individual Bishop. 'In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.' Let us be very quiet, but very firm. Let nothing be said, not even from the pulpit; but let priests act. Act by simply going on. By God's blessing we shall win. That is the only way to fight this matter. 'Not by power, nor by might, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.'" But it may be said that the *Church Review* is an irresponsible organ.

Then let me give you the words of Lord Halifax, who says of himself that there are "some who do him the honour of allowing him in some degree to speak on their behalf" (and only his Lordship's modesty prevented him from saying that they are believed to be a very large number): "The laity will not acquiesce," he says, "in the abandonment of this ancient ritual of the Church, which they have learned to love. They will not consent to be deprived of the opportunities for attending a daily celebration of the Holy Eucharist. They will not tolerate being deprived of the means for Communion when they are sick"—of course, that means the reservation of the Holy Communion — "or in the case of any sudden emergency, secured to them by the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. Nor will they stand the discouragement of the practice of habitual confession." It is to the laity we also now appeal as to their views of the doctrines of the Church of

England. And again, in an address delivered to the members of the E.C.U. on December 14, 1898, he says, "Those principles, whatever the consequences, cannot be surrendered; and the first condition necessary for peace is that this fact should be recognised." I will also give you a quotation from a speech of his Lordship, made at the Annual Meeting of the E.C.U. on June 15, 1899, in which he said, "For example, in matters of doctrine, if the whole Church, as it does, teaches that to refuse to the Blessed Virgin the title of Mother of God is in fact to deny the Incarnation (for if Mary is not Mother of God, then either the Word was not made flesh, or the Word was not God), and that in the Holy Eucharist there is a sacramental identity between the sign and the thing signified, it will be admitted at once that the Church of England is bound by that teaching, and that none of her members have the right to teach the

contrary. So in regard to practice and ceremonial."

Let me venture, without offence, to give Mr. Disraeli's words delivered in a speech on the Public Worship Regulation Act, in July 1874. He said: "What the House and the country understand by Ritualism is practices by a portion of the clergy avowedly symbolic of doctrines which the same clergy are bound in the most solemn manner to refute and repudiate. . . . So long as those doctrines are held by Roman Catholics I am prepared to treat them with reverence; but what I object to is, that they should be held by ministers of our Church who, when they enter the Church, enter it at the same time with a solemn contract with the nation that they will oppose those doctrines and utterly resist them. What I do object to is Mass in masquerade."

And let me conclude my quotations by giving you the words of Sir Joseph Napier in his paper on the Ritual Commission.

"We are anxious," he said, "in no degree to abridge or curtail any of the rightful liberties heretofore enjoyed by the Church's ministers. We hold it to be most desirable that the National Establishment should continue to comprise members who are attached to the different schools of religious thought, so long as every minister whom the Church appoints shall be willing to conform to her standards of doctrine and ritual. But this large comprehension seems to us to render it most desirable, and indeed essential, that in the Church's ministrations the officiating minister should not introduce innovations which are welcome to one party but are wholly offensive to another. Each party in the Church being expected to join in Common Prayer and Holy Communion is, as we conceive, entitled to expect that there should be no variations from established usage that give to the ministration a tendency of which that party disapproves, and by its devotion is im-

peded, and that no symbolism should be used to signify any doctrine that the Church has repudiated or left open and undecided."

Can the Conference be summoned on such a basis as this? If it can, from my heart I would wish it God-speed. If not, let us bow before God with grief (in which shame has a large place) and say: "The Lord have mercy upon the Church of England, for she seems to be fast going upon the rocks, and if—God forbid—she should really be wrecked, it will not be for want of lights or of opportunity for better things, but because the sailors who should have worked the ship as brethren were too much engaged with internecine bitterness and strife to give heed to those rocks on which, if she strikes, the beautiful vessel must inevitably be broken to pieces and be lost."

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